The Situation of Women Leaders at the Local Level in Albania

A Baseline Analysis

September 2010
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QENDRA SHQIPTARE PER KERKIME EKONOMIKE

A C E R

ASET ALBANIAN SOCIO ECONOMIC THINK-TANK

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List of Acronyms

ACER	Albanian Center for Economic Research
CDP	Christian Democratic Party of Albania
CEAZ	Central Electoral Administrative Zone
CEC	Central Electoral Commission
DP	Democratic Party of Albania
DPEO	Directorate of Policies for Equal Opportunities
EC	Electoral Code
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
LGE	Law on Gender Equality
MLP	Movement of Legality Party
MOLSAEO	Ministry of Labour, Social Affaires and Equal Opportunities
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RP	Republican Party of Albania
SMI	Socialist Movement for Integration
SP	Socialist Party of Albania
UHRP	Unity for Human Rights Party
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women in Albania face a number of gender-related challenges that hinder their full engagement in public and political life. Despite recent encouraging events – such as the adoption of Law No 9470 'On Gender Equality in Society' in July 2008, women are still denied the benefits of full and equal participation in democratic process.

Albanian women under-represented in public and political life

Women in Albania still struggle to be elected and appointed to decision-making positions. For instance, at time of publication, there is only one female minister in a Cabinet of 14 Ministers. There are eight female deputy ministers (22.8%) and five female ambassadors (10.2%). However, progress has been made. Since 2005 for the first time a woman was appointed as Speaker of the Parliament. Also, currently there is a woman Head of the High Court and a woman General Prosecutor, but otherwise the representation of women in the judiciary remains low. On the High Council of Justice, there are two women members out of 10 in total, and the Constitutional Court has only one woman member of 8 in total.

Some recent legislative achievements, but overall not enough progress

There is no doubt that recent legislative achievements in Albania, such as the inclusion of gender quotas for elected and appointed positions in the law 'On Gender Equality In Society' (July 2008) and the revised Electoral Code (December 2008), have contributed to an increase in Albania women's political participation at national level. The 2009 parliamentary (national) election saw a doubling of the number of women in parliament: from 7% in 2005 to 16.4% in 2009. But this is still well below the quota of 30%.

Women leaders at the local level particularly face barriers to equal participation

It is at the local level where women fight the toughest battles for equal representation, both as candidates and voters. In the local elections in 2007, only 32 women out of 1073 candidates were nominated for Mayoral/ Head of Commune positions. And of these, only 9 women were elected. Women fight against familial prejudices: they don't have time to participate in politics because they need to look after their families; they fight against discriminatory party mechanisms that deny them access to reliable, relevant information and prohibit their participation in high-level decision-making; they fight against a media obsessed with questions concerning the balance between domestic and public life, rather than contribution to policy debates.

Advocacy and change must occur in the lead-up to the 2011 local elections

In 2011, Albania will hold local administrative elections for the first time since the adoption of the quota. The lead up to these elections presents an excellent opportunity to undertake important activities such as:

- building the capacity of women at the local level to engage in the electoral process, as voters, candidates and commissioners;
- calling on and facilitating political parties to disseminate information about the quota and ensure its implementation;
- working with the media to enhance their role in communicating about the political process and women's role in it.

Research necessary to understand situation and create a baseline for future evaluation

In order to facilitate the above tasks, it was clear that the current situation of women leaders and women's involvement in politics at a local level needed to be carefully investigated. Until now, very little research has been undertaken in this area. This analysis, made possible through the support of UNIFEM (actually UN WOMEN Albania) is intended to contribute to filling this gap by providing a baseline of the situation of local women leaders.

Research methodology

ACER assisted by ASET conducted the research over four months (March-June 2010) in 12 regions across Albania. The methodological approach combined desk research and a review of existing secondary material with primary sources:

1. Semi-structured interviews with 68 leaders of local political party branches and local Women's Forums;
2. A micro survey (a structured, paper-based questionnaire conducted face-to-face) with 102 professionals engaged in the public life of their communities;
3. Regional roundtables held in each of Albania's 12 regions. Participants included individuals from NGOs, civil society, public institutions, academics, students, media, political parties' local branches and the business community.

Research aims

To get a clearer picture of:

- The situation (numbers and scope) of the role of women as leaders in communities across Albania, and their plans for engagement in the local elections in 2011;
- The local party structures and their capacities and plans for implementation of the quota in the local elections, and their local approach towards gender equality and women's human rights issues, including their plans (if any) for restructuring in the lead-up to the 2011 elections;
- Based on the 2007 local elections and subsequent bi-elections, assessing the proportion of women voters and the prevalence of family voting;
- The perceived role and attitude of the media in the promotion and coverage of women's participation in politics.

Key findings:

Despite recent progress, women in Albania face significant social, economic and political obstacles. Women are still significantly under-represented in decision-making positions. For women to gain true gender equality and to enjoy their full human rights, change must be rapid, decisive, visible and inclusive.

In particular:

- While there is widespread general awareness about the quota, no political parties at either the local or national level were, at the time of publication, able to detail firm or clear plans evidencing how they planned to implement the quota, mitigate against family voting or encourage women as constituents;
- There is little awareness about the difference between how the quota applies at the national level as opposed to the local level;
- The current financial sanction imposed upon parties who do not observe the quota is considered too little and ineffectual as a sanction;
- Although Albania's main political parties (Democratic Party [DP], Socialist Party [SP] and the SMI) have formally approved and declared to have implemented the 30% gender quota within their internal structures, data reveals that women are under-represented in decision – making structures at the national level. At the local level the quota on leadership boards has not been fully implemented and it differs significantly by regions;

- There is a perceived lack of transparency and internal democracy within political parties. Decision-making processes, in particular, the selection of individuals for candidate lists are neither clear nor communicated transparently, disadvantaging women candidates and excluding them from decision-making;
- The role of Women's Forums is under-valued and underutilised. They are generally only activated during campaigns. They do not have formal input into the candidate lists and there is a significant gap between the (mostly male) heads of local political party branches and the (female) representatives of Women's Forums with regard to access to information, decision-making and capacity;
- Active discrimination against women participating freely in elections is practiced in the form of family voting. The research results indicate that the family voting phenomenon is especially problematic in rural areas;
- The research reveals that while men believe that women have enough information about the basic voting process, women themselves do not. The findings also show that men believe family voting to be a larger problem than women do;
- Rural women in Albania are positioned on outer edge of political life and are less likely to vote, which make them nearly invisible to decision makers. This is a reminder of the significant gender gap that remains in terms of men's and women's ability to engage in the political life;
- Women from all parties across the political spectrum have low confidence in male party chairs' ability to recognize the potential and actual contribution of women to the political arena and willingness to appoint women to leadership positions within the parties;
- There is a significant gap between men and women's perception of women's leadership ability and capacity and the obstacles to political participation that women face.
- While the media presents an important opportunity and conduit for raising awareness and promoting democracy, coverage of campaigns is often superficial, misinformed and exhibits tangible bias against women candidates.

Interestingly, despite all of the barriers, the research also indicates that women's right to political participation – as voters and candidates – is increasingly accepted in Albania. Some citizens expect that an increase in women's participation in governance will improve service provision, reduce corruption, increase transparency and ameliorate the aggressiveness of Albania politics.

It is the hope of the authors that the research and analysis undertaken will be useful in informing Albanian civil society's (and their international partners) advocacy efforts in pushing

for an increase in women's participation in local elections, both as voters and as candidates. In addition, this research has supplied a much-needed baseline against which the results of the quota's implementation in the 2011 local elections and future elections can be measured.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the adoption of Law No 9470 'On Gender Equality in Society' in July 2008, women in Albania still struggle to be elected and appointed to decision-making positions within the political arena in Albania.

The local elections (expected May 2011) provide an opportunity to change this and significantly increase the representation of women in government. In order to ensure this happens, however, the opportunity to strengthen both institutional mechanisms and the capacity of women candidates must be seized now. In addition, awareness and understanding of the value women bring to public life, their right to self-representation, and the necessity of their involvement at influential decision-making levels must be improved. The media and civil society networks are important conduits for making this happen.

This research report indicates that there is general awareness about the existence of the gender quota law. It confirms that the legal framework is in place, as are party statutes, to ensure that women make up 30% of the candidates in the local election, i.e. listed in every third slot on the candidate lists (party ballots). It also flags that there is a significant lack of information about how the gender quota will be implemented. This needs to be remedied immediately – at both the political party and general community level - to ensure that the law is complied with in the upcoming local election in May 2011.

General recommendations

Broad recommendations arising from this report include:

1. A national civic education campaign must be conducted to raise awareness of the role and rights of women as candidates and voters;
2. Technical expertise must be provided to the political parties to ensure that the legal framework in place is followed, quota provisions and transparent and inclusive internal decision-making frameworks are implemented and adhered to;
3. The CEC must be empowered to enforce the law with strong sanctions (eg. the preferred option is for the CEC to be able to reject a candidate list that does not comply with the gender quota).

Specific recommendations

Specific recommendations that emerged from the research and the roundtables include the following:

1. *To strengthen the legislative framework and institutional mechanisms:*

- Enforcement of the Law on Gender Balance in Society to ensure the implementation

of 30% quota for women and girls in both local and national elections by including the names of female candidates in the lists of candidates;

- Amending the Electoral Code in order to ensure better implementation of the gender quota by giving an end to the ambiguity expressed in relation to national elections (candidates ranking options "and/or");
- Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of gender quota sanctioned in the LGE and EC, such as: applying equal standards for both national and local elections through strengthening the role of CEC in rejecting lists that do not fulfill the quota;
- Provide training to commissioners and the CEC to ensure that the gender quota is enforced and family voting not tolerated;
- Build the capacity of institutions at the central level and local levels for the implementation of the LGE and quota;
- Establish a network of political activists to lobby in support of implementation of the gender quota in the 2011 local elections. This should include women deputies, representatitves of the Women's Political Forums, women and men politicians institutions for equal opportunity etc; and,
- Strengthen the institutional mechanisms for gender equality and increase its coordination role between all stakeholders in terms of respecting the LGE and gender quota and including gender issues in all government policies.

2. *To strengthen the capacity of political parties, NGOs and representatives of special interest groups:*

- Increase the level of knowledge about the Electoral Code and LGE and gender quota among the male leaders of political parties, including central leadership and local branches, as well as Women's Political Forums and media and NGO representatives;
- Strengthen the capacity of political parties through various trainings on gender issues, leadership and communication skills for men and women at both national and local level;
- Strengthen the capacity of local NGOs to play an important role in lobbying and in monitoring the implementation of gender quota by all political parties;
- Increase the civic and voter education in advance of the elections on political party's electoral programmes, voting process, women's rights and family voting. This is especially needed in schools and universities to challenge and address discriminatory stereotypes;

- The awareness campaign with women about the importance of their votes during the election processes in support of women candidates should focus on communities and especially the rural areas where there is a lack of information about their involvement in the public sphere;
- Establish new and strengthen existing networks at the regional, national and local levels between representatives of all interest groups and civil society to advocate and support the increased representation of women in politics and decision-making;
- Support parties in drafting and promoting concrete plans and strategies to increase involvement and representation of women in party structures at all levels;
- Clearly define measures that ensure equal representation and participation of women in politics and Parliament by all political parties and announcement of these measures to the public.

3. *To build the capacity of potential women candidates:*

- Identify potential women candidates (through NGOs, Women's Political Forums etc) and support them to enter the political main stream through providing leadership and technical skills training (e.g. negotiation skills, public communication skills, budgeting, etc) to potential women candidates;
- Establish mentoring programs to link experienced women officials with new and young candidates;
- Draft additional programs in the education system (summer courses, extracurricular courses, student competitions, etc) at high school and university levels on management skills (leadership) and gender equality with special focus on first time voters;
- Support policies within parties that promote equality (e.g. provision of childcare so both men and women can attend political meetings); and,
- Ensure that representatives of Women's Political Forums receive training and support alongside the heads of political parties.

4. *To improve the quality and quantity of media engagement and coverage:*

- Strengthen the role of the media in promoting women in politics, in terms of awareness about the gender quota, the right of women for self-representation, the value of robust female engagement in politics and democratic process;
- Build the capacity of journalists and mass media managers with more in-depth knowledge on gender issues in order to develop competent and professional media coverage;

- Train NGOs on how to do better advocacy with the media, including helping them to identify and promote stories about the positive experiences and success stories of women leaders on global, national and local levels;
- Encourage and call to account the media in respect to their equal treatment of male and female political representatives, in relation to their portrayal of candidates and honest, ethical reporting of issues;
- Monitor media coverage in the lead-up to and during the elections for gender equality and bias issues and provide this report to parliament and the media; and
- Support the broadcasting of TV and radio pieces and newspaper articles about women's rights, involvement and equality.

In summary, there is a strong momentum at all levels of Albania society to improve the participation of women in the process of governance, nationally and locally. In order to capitalize on this momentum, and improve women's representation, strengthen the rule of law and further consolidate democratic processes and institutions, Albania must ensure that its gender quota is fully implemented in the 2011 local elections.

1. Introduction

Recent legislative victories in Albania, in particular the inclusion of quotas for elected and appointed positions in the law "On Gender Equality in Society" (July 2008) and the revised Electoral Code (December 2008), have led to an increase in Albanian women's political participation at the national level. The 2009 parliamentary elections saw a doubling of the number of women in parliament: from 7% in 2005 to 16.4% in 2009. Despite these gains, women's full and equal participation in decision-making in the public arena continues to be restricted by pervasive stereotypes and discriminatory practices – particularly at the local level. Thus, increasing women's participation in decision-making is a national priority for gender equality advocates in Albania. It is a primary objective, for instance, of Albania's National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007 – 2010).

In 2011, Albania will hold local administrative elections for the first time since the adoption of the quota. Before the elections, there is an opportunity to work with political parties to disseminate information about the quota and to ensure its implementation. There is also a need to build the capacity of women at the local level and enhance their ability to engage in the electoral process – as voters, candidates, and commissioners. This report is designed to facilitate those efforts.

Until now, very little research has been conducted on the situation of women leaders at the local level in Albania. This analysis, made possible through the support of UN Women Albania was designed to fill that gap. This research considers the term "*women leaders*" to be defined as local women who are active in the local branches of the parties; within city councils; local-level public administration; as education and health administrators and professionals; women active in the business community and; as community leaders within civil society.

Specifically, and through participatory research at the local level in 12 regions, ACER with assistance of ASET and UN Women conducted this research to ensure a clear understanding of:

- the situation (numbers and scope) of the role of women as leaders in communities nationwide and their plans for engagement in the local elections;
- the local party structures and their capacities and plans for implementation of the quota in the local elections, and their local approach towards gender equality and women's human rights issues. Also, looking at plans for restructuring that may occur in the lead up to the 2011 elections; and
- based on the 2007 local elections and subsequent bi-elections, assessing the proportion of women voters and the prevalence of family voting, drawing also from findings of the National Survey.

The ultimate aim of this research is that findings inform the advocacy efforts of civil society and international partners in Albania in advocating for an increase in women's participation in the local elections, both as voters and as candidates; and to develop a much-needed baseline against which the results of the quota's implementation in the 2011 Local Elections and future local elections can be measured.

1.1. Background

Women's engagement in the public sphere has gone through several transitions in Albania's recent past. Immediately after the communist period, women were generally pushed out of public and political life. "The transition from communism to democracy was, in part, accompanied by a call for a return to 'traditional' values ...the number of women in politics dropped radically in the first parliaments formed under democracy."[1] Since that retrenchment in the 1990's, women have begun to push their way back, politically and economically. The 2005 parliamentary elections saw an increase in the number of women candidates, but at that point Albania still ranked last in terms of women's political representation in Southern Europe.[2]

Women face a number of gender-specific challenges in Albania and could, if empowered and organized, be an important constituency in this burgeoning democracy. Therefore, their access to the political process, both as voters and as party members and candidates, is of central importance to their advancement overall. The quota law and the 2009 election were a watershed for women's political participation in Albania.

2009 National Election

The June 2009 parliamentary elections were the first to be held in Albania on the basis of the new Electoral Code approved in December 2008.[3] The Electoral Code introduced significant improvements. A regional proportional representation party list system replaced the previous controversial election system. A national computerized population register was created and used as a source of voter lists, reducing the risk of fraud. Overall, the new legal framework provided a thorough technical foundation for conducting democratic elections.

The 2009 national election was the first to take place after the passage of the law, "On Gender Equality in Society" (July 2008), which instituted a quota for women's participation in political life. It stated that at least 30 percent of appointed positions should be filled by the under-represented sex (i.e. women). It also stated that 30 percent of all candidates put forward in national and local elections should be from the under-represented sex. The subsequent Electoral Code (December 2008) stated that, in national elections, candidates from both sexes must be represented among the first three names on lists submitted by political parties, and/or that the under-represented sex must be 30 percent of each party's list.

In that election, twenty-three women deputies were elected, which was 16.4% of the total 140 seats in the Assembly of the Republic of Albania (Kuvendi i Republikës së Shqipërisë).

1) Albanian Centre for Economic Research and the Albanian Social Economic Think Tank, "Public Perception of Women's Participation in Elections in Albania: A Survey", Page 8, 2008.

2) Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Report on Women in Politics," January 2008.

3) Central Electoral Commission, Law No.10019, "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania", dated 29.12.2008

Implementation of the Gender Quota

Social science research has established that in order for minority groups to rise above token status and make a significant impact on the dominant culture, they need to be represented at a level of at least 30 percent.[4] This number is generally referred to as reaching a "critical mass." The international women's movement has embraced the concept of critical mass, and a 30 percent target with regard to women's political participation. It was included, for instance, in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which states that women should occupy 30 percent of all decision-making positions.[5] As the number of countries embracing electoral quotas has increased in recent years, 30 percent has become a widely accepted and common goal. As the UN has observed, however, "electoral systems are not gender-neutral. The type of system in place can have a major impact on the number of women elected to office. ... [Many] aspects of election systems – including types of candidate lists, district magnitude, and threshold levels – significantly affect women's electoral prospects as well."[6] Similarly, not all quotas are created equal. The design, implementation, and enforcement of quotas vary greatly from country to country.

As stated above, women earned 16.4% of seats, or 23 mandates, in the June 2009 parliamentary election in Albania. This is the greatest percentage of women parliamentarians since Albania's communist period. It is far below 30 percent, however. The "Law on Gender Equality in Society" (2008) and the new Electoral Code (2008) were important steps forward in terms of women's representation, but did not result in a critical mass of women entering parliament.

From the point of view of women activists in Albania, the national party list quota adopted by the December 2008 Electoral Code weakened language that had appeared in the July 2008 Law on Gender Equality in Society. While the Law on Gender Equality in Society called for women's political participation to reach the level of 30 percent, the Electoral Code did not put in place mechanisms that would guarantee that. The Electoral Code gave parties the latitude to decide whether they would include women's names as one of three names at the top of the list or whether they would simply include women as 30 percent of the overall candidate list. In fact, by specifying that parties could fulfill the quota by either listing a woman in one of the first three names and/or as 30 percent of the whole list, it created the conditions for an overall 30 percent target not to be met. The Electoral Code is organic law and it superseded the Law on Gender Equality in Society.

4) Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. "Some of Effects of Proportion on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women", *The American Journal of Sociology* 82, 5: 965–990, March 1977.

5) Beijing Platform for Action, Beijing: United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Para. 182, 1995 Available from: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm.

6) UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues, "Women and Elections: A Guide to Promoting the Participation of Women in Elections", Page 12, Available from: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/TableofContents.htm

Upcoming 2011 Elections

Given the mixed success of women involvement in the 2009 national election, advocates of women's political participation have now turned their attention to the 2011 local elections. Given that the Electoral Code's (2008) quota for the under-represented sex on local-level party lists in local elections, and the formula for its application (every third name, equaling 30% on each list), there is particular interest. When the last local elections were held in 2007, before the quota had been introduced, there were only 33 women out of 1,073 candidates nominated for mayoral posts nationwide (3%),of these only 9 women were elected. To date, there is very little comprehensive information available about the situation of local women leaders – in either the local branches of the political parties or the Women's Political Forums, which are essentially women's auxiliaries to the parties. Critically, there is also very little information available about how political parties intend to comply with the quota at the local level in the upcoming 2011 election.

Local elections, held every four years, include the election of mayors in the municipalities and communes at the regional ("*qark*") level and the election of members of city councils and commune councils. On the election day, voters will complete two ballots: one for the election of mayor and one for the election of council members. Political parties registered as a coalition with the Central Election Commission (CEC) can propose only one joint candidate for a mayor of a municipality or commune.[7] The members of the councils of the municipalities or communes are elected on the basis of the multi-name lists submitted by the political parties, coalitions or of candidacies proposed by the voters to CEC.

As stated above, there is a critical difference between the way in which the quota law applies to the parliamentary and the local elections. At the national level, the Electoral Code mandates that for each electoral zone, at least thirty percent of a multi-name list and/or one of the first three names on the list must be from each sex. At the local level, however, *one out of every three names throughout the list* must belong to each sex.[8] In other words, as written, the quota at the local level is much stronger and, if enforced, much more likely to produce a critical mass of women in local councils.

7) Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, "Chapter II: Election System For Local Government Organs", Article 165 and 166, available at: http://www.cec.org.al/2004/eng/legjislacion/kodizgjedhor/Electoral%20Code.pdf

8) Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 67, Available at: http://www.cec.org.al/2004/eng/legjislacion/kodizgjedhor/Electoral%20Code.pdf

Legal Framework

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Albania,[9] *the units of local government are communes or municipalities and regions (qark). The executive body of the municipality or commune is the mayor, who is elected directly by people. The representative bodies of local government units are the councils who are elected every four years with general, direct and secret ballot elections.*

According to the Electoral Code,[10] ***Article 165 and 166,*** *the mayors of the municipalities or communes, as well as the municipalities' councils or communes' councils are elected by a direct vote by the voters with a residence in the territory of the municipality or commune. The candidate who obtains the largest number of valid votes of the voters of a local unit is elected mayor of the respective municipality or commune. The seats of the local councils are allocated by the CEC on the basis of the proportional system. The ranking of the parties for the purpose of allocating the seats on the Commission of an Electoral Administration Zone (CEAZ) is determined in accordance with the number of votes won nationwide for local councils in the previous elections by the parliamentary parties.*

According to the Electoral Code,[11] ***Article 67 on the list of candidates of parties and of party coalitions:***

1. A political party that is registered with the CEC as an electoral subject for the elections to the Assembly is to submit to the CEC its multi-name list of candidates for each electoral zone no later than 40 days before the election date. For elections of local government organs, the candidates for mayor of a municipality or commune, as well as lists of candidates for local councils, are to be registered with the CEAZ that covers the local government unit. A copy of the list is to be submitted by the CEAZ to the CEC.

2. No later than 40 days before the election date, a political party participating in a coalition is to submit to the CEC its multi-name list of candidates. For elections of local government organs, the list of candidates is registered with the CEAZ. A copy of the list is submitted by the CEAZ to the CEC.

3. A candidate for deputy registered on a multi-name list in one electoral zone or a candidate for municipal or communal council cannot be registered as such for another electoral zone, either as a candidate of another party or coalition or as a candidate proposed by a group of

9) Constitution of the Republic of Albania, Article 108, "Local Government", Available at: http://www.cec.org.al/2004/eng/legjislacion/kushtetuta/kushtetutaframeqender.htm#Pjesa6

10) Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, "Chapter II: Election System For Local Government Organs", Article 165 and 166 , available at: http://www.cec.org.al/2004/eng/legjislacion/kodizgjedhor/Electoral%20Code.pdf

11) Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 67, Available at: http://www.cec.org.al/2004/eng/legjislacion/kodizgjedhor/Electoral%20Code.pdf

voters. The chairmen of political parties that are running either on their own or as part of a coalition are exempt from this rule, as they may run in one or more electoral zones for elections to the Assembly.

4. Names on the party list appear listed in numerical order, starting with number one. The number of the candidates on the multi-name list of a political party registered as an electoral subject on its own or part of a coalition should not be less than the number of seats assigned to the respective electoral zone. For parties composing a coalition, the number of candidates per party should not be less than half of the number of seats assigned to the respective electoral zone. The same rule applies to the multi-name lists for municipal or communal councils.

5. For each electoral zone, at least thirty percent of the multi-name list and/or one of the first three names on the multi-name list must be from each gender. For elections of local government organs, one in every three names on the list must belong to each gender.

6. Failure to comply with any of the conditions provided in this article related to the composition of a multi-name list for elections to the Assembly brings as a result the rejection of the list by the CEC. Failure to comply with the condition provided in point 5 of this article for the elections of local government organs is penalized in accordance with article 175 of this Code.

According to Law No 9970 (date 24.07.2008), "Gender Equality in Society " (GEL[12]), Article 15 on participation in the decision making process:

1. Equal gender participation and representation in all legislative, executive, judicial power bodies as well as in other public institutions shall be achieved when:

a) A representation of above 30% of both sexes is ensured, including their steering bodies is ensured;

b) Equal observation of competition procedures and criteria for both genders for the assignments in these bodies is ensured;

c) A participation of above 30% of both sexes in the list of candidates for the local government elections is ensured.

d) A participation of not less than 30% of each sex in the candidates' list presented by the political parties for the proportional system for the general Assembly elections is ensured.

e) A participation of above 30% of each sex in the central and local elections process administration bodies is ensured.

2. The political parties shall define methods and measures to comply with the requirements provided in section 1 of this article.

3. The political parties shall pay a fine of up to one tenth of the state funds for the electoral campaign, if they violate the provisions of this article, until they undo the violation.

12) Law No.9970, "Gender Equality in Society", date on 24.07.2008, Available at: http://www.mpcs.gov.al/dpshb/en/legjislacioni/laws

1.2. Methodological Approach

The methodological approach combined desk research and a review of existing secondary material with primary sources (semi-structured interviews, a micro-survey, and regional roundtable meetings). These various instruments allowed for the assessment of a) local political parties' access to information and awareness about the gender quotas; b) political parties' plans to identify, promote and increase women's participation in local structures in accordance with the quota for candidate lists in the upcoming election; c) attitudes about women leaders; and d) the general will and availability of women with leadership potential to engage as candidates and commissioners in the 2011 local election.

Desk Research

Existing studies and reports, from relevant institutions and organizations on the situation of women in decision-making positions (both elected and appointed), as well as the implementation of gender quotas were reviewed. These included the reports of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the political programs and statutes of the main political parties, at both the central level and local branches. In addition, the desk research examined secondary data in the form of studies and reports published by international organizations (e.g. UN Women, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and local NGOs). Particular attention was paid to gaps in existing research.

Semi-Structured Interviews

A total of 68 semi-structured interviews were conducted between 22 April – 10 May 2010 with leaders of local political party branches and local women's political forums to assess interviewees' level of knowledge and capacity with regard to the legislative framework on gender quotas. ACER in collaboration with UN Women designed the format of the semi-structured interviews based on a list of open-ended questions. ACER local coordinators in all 12 regions conducted the interviews. The selection of political parties in each region was slightly different, based on which parties held seats on the city council and the weight of their votes in the parliamentary elections. The greatest share of interviews was conducted with the two major parties, the DP and SP.

In particular the interviews were designed to assess:

- the approach of the political parties to increasing the number of women in their leadership structures at local level;

- the progress and obstacles in the implementation of gender quotas; and
- the participation of women in political forums as members and potential candidates.

The analysis of the findings of the semi-structured interviews with representatives of political parties' local branches was comparative, considering the following:

- **Size of Party**: The findings of two major political parties Democratic Party (DP) and Socialist Party (SP) and the small parties: Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI), Republican Party of Albania (RP), Unity for Human Rights Party (UHRP) Movement of Legality Party (MLP), Christian Democratic Party of Albania (CDP), New Democracy Party (NDR)as per share of representation in local government (City Councils);
- **Regional Diversity**: The geographic distribution of the territory of Albania while completing semi-structured interviews (district "qark" based), respectively in 12 regions;
- **Gender**: The structure of the political parties' local branches, including the political party leaders and heads of local Women's Political Forums. This comparison enabled a gender analysis to assess men's and women's knowledge about the implementation of the gender quota in local party structure and on candidate lists.

The results of the interviews provided the basis for the subsequent regional roundtables, described below.

Table 1: Distribution of Semi-Structured Interviews by Political Party

Political Party	Local party leaders		Reps. of local Women's Political Forums		Total interviews for each party
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
DP	12	0	0	12	24
SP	11	1	0	12	24
SMI	5	0	0	5	10
RP	2	0	0	2	4
UHRP	1	0	0	1	2
MLP	1	0	0	1	2
CDP	1	0	0	1	2
TOTAL	33	1	0	34	68

Source: ACER, semi-structured interviews

Micro-survey

A micro-survey was conducted during the period of 20 May – 8 June 2010. The survey was carried out with a limited sample of 102 respondents. A structured, paper-based questionnaire was conducted on a face-to-face basis with respondents. Respondents were identified in advance by ACER local coordinators and approved by ACER and UN Women. The respondents were all professionals engaged in the public life of their respective communities.

Table 2: Distribution of Micro-Survey Questionnaire by Target Group

Target Groups	Total number of respondents	No. of Women	No. of Women in %	No. of Men in %
Education (Universities and High School)	35	23	66	34
Public Administration	26	14	54	46
NGO/International Organizations	13	8	62	38
Private Sector	11	6	55	45
Health Service	5	1	20	80
Agriculture/ Industry	4	3	75	25
Other	8	2	20	80
Total	102	57	56	44

Source: ACER, Micro-Survey

Field surveys were completed by ACER's local coordinators, who are researchers with consolidated experience (local NGOs, university staff, etc.).They were supervised by an ACER project coordinator. The sample selection covered all 12 regions of Albania.

Table 3: Distribution of Micro-Survey Questionnaire by Region (Qark)

Region	Number of Respondents	% of Total
Berat	6	5.9
Dibër	7	6.9
Durrës	10	9.8

Region	Number of Respondents	% of Total
Elbasan	9	8.8
Fier	7	6.9
Gjirokastër	8	7.8
Korçë	11	10.8
Kukës	6	5.9
Lezhë	7	6.9
Shkodër	9	8.8
Tiranë	13	12.7
Vlorë	9	8.8
Total	102	100.0

Source: ACER, Micro-Survey

The surveys collected information on a) people's perceptions about the role of women as voters and what challenges women face in the voting process; b) citizens' opinions about the political parties' approaches and their plans for implementing the gender quota; c) perceptions of the capabilities of women leaders in the respective regions and the aspiration of respondents (women and men) to be engaged in politics and participate in the 2011 elections; d) qualities desired in leaders; and e) the role of local party branches in the implementation of the gender quota.

The data was processed using SPSS software. Interpretations of the main findings of the questionnaire informed the development of subsequent roundtable discussions.

Regional Roundtables

Regional roundtables were held in each of Albania's 12 regions between 25 May -10 June 2010. These discussions were designed to share initial research results from the semi-structured interviews and micro-survey, and to provoke discussion among opinion leaders at the regional level.[13] Participants included representatives of public institutions, political parties' local branches, women's rights activists and members of Women's Political Forums, local NGOs, civil society, academics, students, media and the business community, etc. Participants in the regional meetings were identified based on their professional background (sectors of employment) and interest in discussing the findings from the research on the situation of women leaders at the local level.

13) Albanian Constitution, Article 108, point 1 "The units of local government are comunes or municipalities and regions ('qark'). Other units of local government are regulated by law".

The purpose of regional roundtable meetings was to discuss:

i) the main objectives of the project and its expectations;
ii) implementation of gender quotas and plans in the perspective of local elections;
iii) participation of women in politics as candidates: challenges and opportunities for increased engagement and their promotion in the near future;
iv) exchange views on the role of women as leaders in decision-making positions,
v) collect information on potential women leaders in their respective communities;
vi) identify the problems of Women Political Forums and their engagement in decision-making structures featuring each of the regions;
vii) the participation of women as voters and prevalence of family voting; and
viii) challenges of quota implementation at the local level, as both commissioners and candidates.

Table 4: Participation in Regional Roundtables by Target Group

Target Group	Total no. of Participants	In % to Total (men and women)
Local and Central Government Institutions	88	33
Education	58	21
NGO/Associations	47	17
P.P local Branches	45	17
Media	17	6
Business	15	6
Total	270	100

Source: ACER, Regional Roundtable Meetings

The agenda consisted of presentations on the legislative framework (the new Electoral Code (2008) and Law "On Gender Equality in Society"), data on the numbers of women appointed and elected in recent years, the main findings of ACER's monitoring report on the parliamentary elections, and results of the semi-structured interviews and micro-survey. The agenda also included discussion on the implementation of gender quotas (national and local level), the legislative framework of the CEC, and civil society perspectives on challenges and progress. Participants were also asked identify concrete recommendations for improving the situation of women leaders at local level. Advocacy materials were distributed and relevant publications on gender quotas were provided to all participants. Local media covered the regional meetings extensively. For each regional meeting, the findings and recommendations were compiled. Specific findings from each region are included in Chapter 4 of this report.

2. Women's Leadership at the Local Level

Local, or sub-national, government plays a significant role in the lives of citizens, perhaps even more so than the national government does. Citizens expect their local government, for instance, to deliver services, manage public resources and infrastructure, and mediate disputes. Citizens are more likely to come into contact on a daily basis with representatives of their local government than with representatives of their national government. Thus, it is critical that both women and men serve in local government, and that local government is equipped to respond to the needs of both female and male constituents.

The local level is also where many politicians begin their careers, gaining experience before moving on to the national level of government. In this way, it can serve as an important training ground for good governance.

Globally, comparative statistics on women's participation in local government are incomplete. The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) published a global survey in 1998, however, that estimated women's participation at the local level to be generally higher than their presence at the national level.[14]

Overall in Albania, since the 2010 parliamentary elections, there has been an increase in awareness regarding the role of the citizens and civil society in a democratic society. This has included an increase in awareness regarding women's participation in governance. Yet very little data exists on women in local leadership positions in Albania or about local party branches attempts to advance women's engagement.

2.1. Women's Participation as Voters and Engaged Citizens

According to CEC data, the overall voter turnout rate in Albania increased by 2% between the 2005 national elections and the 2009 national elections. In 2005, 1,403,473 people voted (49% of those eligible to vote). In 2009, there were 1,566,079 people voted (51% of those who were eligible to vote) [15]. But in Parliamentary Elections of 2001 the percentage of voters was the highest, 55.6% as refered to in the official bulletin of CEC.[16]

14) "*Women in Local Government*", Stockholm: International Union of Local Authorities, 1998, cited in: "*Women's Political Participation and Good Governance: 21st Century Challenges*", New York: United Nations Development Programme, 2000. Available from: http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/Gender-Pub-21stcentury.pdf

15) Refering to last Parliamentary Elections held on June 2009 there is no data on voters per sex dissagregation. Based on the Directive No.1220, dated on 27.5.2010 'For determining the indicators of assessment and monitoring of gender equality and violence against women, domestic violence, including the supervision, collection and processing them' (Official Bulletin No.78, 2010), it is the task of the CEC and INSTAT (Albanian Institute of Statistics) to ensure gender statistics in relation to parliamentary and local elections.

16) Central Electoral Commission (CEC), Bulletin of Parliamentaty Election 2001, "Results of Elections according to Political Parties nationwide", pg. 677.

Table 5. Comparative Data on Elections Participation[17]

	Local Elections			Parliamentary Elections		
	2000	2003	2007	2001	2005	2009
Voters in the Voters List	96,9148	2,703,608	2,900,000	2,499,238	2,850,821	3,084,067
Voters participating in the election	459,381	N/A*	N/A	1,389,297	1,403,473	156,6079
%	47.40	N/A	N/A	55.6	49	51

Source: Electoral Commission (CEC), Bulletin of Parliamentaty Election 2001

**N/A: Data not Available*

In the ACER analysis, micro-survey respondents, selected in part because they were engaged in the public life of their communities, voted at greater rates than the average population. Among micro-survey respondents, 95% participated in both the 2007 administrative elections and the 2009 parliamentary elections.

How Voters Choose Candidates

The micro-survey asked respondents how they selected which candidate to vote for. The survey provided respondents with a series of potential responses, from which they were free to choose as many as were applicable. Overall, the most frequent responses to this question were: "I voted the political party that the candidate represents," and "I thought about whether or not the candidate fulfills or seems like he/she will fulfill his/her promises." An examination of men and women's answers reveal similar responses. 52 percent of women and 48 percent of men selected both these reasons.

When one examines additional criteria, however, some gender differences emerge. For example, the response, "I liked the platforms and commitments he/she promised and I liked the candidate", was identified by 63 percent of women and 37 percent of men. Another response, "I discussed my vote with my family members and followed their advice", was selected by 62 percent of women and 39 percent of men.

These responses seem to show that most Albaniansvote on the basis of the political party

17) Available at: http://www.shqipmedia.com/2009/06/3084067-votues-ne-zgjedhjet-e-28-qershorit/
http://lajme.dervina.com/archive/8847-3417:336/Sot-ne-Shqiperi-mbahen-zgjedhjet-lokale.htm
http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2003/10/730_sq.pdf

and not on the basis of individual candidates. This finding was further corroborated in the regional roundtables. This is potentially good news for advocates of women's participation, and could be used to suggest that parties can include women on their party lists without experiencing a loss in the voting booth. However, given the relatively well-educated and gender-sensitive nature of the interview and survey samples, it is not possible to draw a definitive conclusion about this perception. It does, however, open up an important point of conversation in Albania. If political party is more important to voters than the individual candidates on the list, it would seem that there is an important entry point for women candidates. This data is re-enforced by a 2007 nation-wide perception survey carried out with over 1100 individuals interviewed across the country.[18]

Family Voting and Other Obstacles for Women Voters

The issue of family voting has received a lot of attention in Albania in recent years. It is a widespread practice and sobefore the 2009 parliamentary election, for instance, international organizations and local political actors sponsored an awareness campaign to discourage family voting. According to international standards, the practice of family voting, in which one family member (typically male) casts ballots on behalf of the entire family, or in which a husband and wife enter the voting booth together, is not an acceptable practice in democratic elections. According to the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues, "Family voting is particularly likely to detract from women's ability to cast individual and secret ballots. In its worst form, family voting constitutes a type of fraud in which women are deliberately deprived of their right to vote. If perpetrated deliberately and on a large scale, family voting can bring into question whether an election outcome reflects the will of the people."[19]

In Albania, the phenomenon of family voting is at times less direct, or obvious, than in the classic example above in which a family member accompanies a woman into the voting booth and votes for her. Research has demonstrated that, in fact, family voting starts at home. In Albania, women who do not vote often report that it is because their families did not vote. "Women are much less likely than men to be politically engaged if their families choose to remain uninvolved."[20] And as evidenced in the question about candidate selection above, women were more likely than men to report having consulted with their families about who to vote for. The research results indicate that the family voting phenomenon is especially problematic in rural areas in the north of the country.

18) Albanian Centre for Economic Research and the Albanian Social Economic Think Tank, "Public Perception of Women's Participation in Elections in Albania: A Survey", 2007

19) UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues, "Women and Elections: A Guide to Promoting the Participation of Women in Elections, Chapter Five – Voter and Civic Education", Available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/TableofContents.htm

20) Opcit. Page 17, 2008

Respondents to the micro-survey were asked to identify the major obstacles that impede women's voting. Again, respondents were free to select more than one response. The responses indicate gender differences in participants' understanding of the problems.

Table 6. Major Obstacles for Women as Voters – According to Men and Women

Obstacle	Percent of men who indicated this was an obstacle for women	Percent of women who indicated this was an obstacle for women
"Lack of knowledge about political programmes."	32%	28%
"Lack of information about voting process."	0%	19%
"Family members decided to vote for her."	67%	33%

Source: ACER, Micro-Survey

These responses reveal that while men believe that women have enough information about the basic voting process, women themselves do not. This highlights the need for more civic and voter education in advance of the next elections. The responses also reveal that men believe family voting to be a larger problem than women do.

Also, the survey revealed that there are still some logistical obstacles for women voters, such as a lack of passport or ID, etc. Generally, however, this is believed to have improved since the last parliamentary election. (Few respondents 7 women and 1 man selected the logistical issues as obstacle).

Rural women

It would be misleading to assume that all women have the same ability to engage in the political process, as either voters or candidates. In particular, rural women in Albania face greater challenges and are underrepresented politically. Despite the decrease of the rural population in the country due to migration, rural women still make up a quarter of the Albanian society, and therefore a substantial part of the electorate. But they still are not present in the country's political sphere. Factors that have contributed to this relative political isolation are:[21]

21) Sonila Danaj, "Women in rural areas: Citizens of invisible politics", 2 June 2009

- physical difficulties caused by distance between their homes and the center of the village where political activities take place;
- lack of information due to lack of energy or time to attend political developments;
- burdensome daily workload;
- disappointment with politics;
- lack of education;
- poverty; and
- lack of employment possibilities or socializing opportunities outside the home.

Despite limited data and research studies on rural women, it is assessed that these factors are exacerbated by the persistent patriarchal mentality, which holds that women do not have the capacity to engage in politics. Therefore decisions are made for women in various forms, including the phenomenon of family voting.

Consequently, rural women in Albania are positioned on outer edge of political life and are less likely to vote, which make them nearly invisible to decision makers. This concern is addressed further in this paper, in the results from the roundtable discussion in the Dibra Region. Participants in that roundtable expressed concern that the political sphere was highly aggressive and not conducive to the participation of women, that the society in the rural and northern areas of the country is quite patriarchal, and that it is difficult to identify potential women candidates in those areas.

While gains for women in Albania in recent years should be celebrated, the experience of rural women is a reminder of the significant gender gap that remains in terms of men's and women's ability to engage in the political life of their country.

2.2. Desirable Characteristics for Leaders

In countries all over the world, women in leadership positions encounter resistance and bias. Albania has been a conservative society in which men dominated and for centuries played the leading role, even though under communism, statistics showed a significant proportion of women in the governing structure. Nowadays, the mentality is changing. Increasingly, both men and women have access to decision-making positions, labor market, education, business, culture, judiciary, etc.

In recent years, various policies and programs, including awareness raising campaigns on gender issues, have sought to change attitudes. Central to this have been the efforts to bring Albania in line with EU legislation, and to ratify relevant international protocols concerning gender equality. Nowadays in Albania, women are serving in key decision-making positions such as Speaker of Parliament, Chair of the Supreme Court, and Prosecutor General. These

women, the first to serve in these roles, are important role models. Their presence in these positions has also gone a long way toward changing attitudes towards women's capacity to lead. Among respondents to the micro-survey, a majority (57.8%) felt that public perceptions of women's leadership have shifted and that Albanians perceive men and women to be equally capable of political leadership.

Respondents to the micro-survey were asked to identify the main characteristics of a good leader. For women, the most important characteristics are "values and ethics" and "skills and strength," respectively with 36 percent and 21 percent. Notably, women selected "values and ethics" three times as often as men did. For men, the most important characteristics are "skills and strength" and "self-confidence and integrity", respectively with 20 percent and 16 percent.

Respondents were also asked what a leader must be able to do. The following were the top responses:

- "Must respond to a situation with a clear vision for the common good of society and organization." (49% of women and 48% of men)
- "Must be a manager with vision and a desire to identify the needs of others." (58% of women and 48% of men)
- "Must initiate positive change, growth and new ideas." (73% of women and 23% of men)

2.3. Women's Participation in Political Parties' Women's Political Forums

The representation of women in local political party decision-making remains limited. Despite national-level party quotas, the majority of women at the local level are involved not in the main party structures, but instead in auxiliary Women's Political Forums, which do not have official decision-making authority within the parties. The Political Forums are a vehicle through which women can participate in political life, particularly at the local level. These forums contribute to the implementation of relevant political party programs and the promotion of their respective political ideologies, while increasing party membership from year to year. The general view, however, is that such political forums are peripheral and only play an active role during electoral campaigns. ACER conducted interviews with both representatives of the political parties' leadership and of the Women's Political Forums to ascertain their views on women's leadership.

While the views of the male chairs of political parties were generally positive concerning the role of women in party leadership, the women who were interviewed said that they often felt "used" by party leaders and in return received only modest commitments and no decision-making power.

By analyzing the responses provided by representatives of Women's Political Forums on the role and activities of the forums, one can see that political forums play only a supporting role. Despite having been founded (for the most part) at the same time the parties were established, the Women's Political Forums do not play an independent role in terms of budget or decision-making. Only occasionally do Women's Political Forums have influence on local political party decision-making, such as when they nominate relevant women candidates. In the best case scenario, these women may be elected as a vice-chair of a large party unit, such as an assembly, section, local organization, secretariat, etc.

When asked if the establishment of quotas for the under-represented sex was significant in increasing the number of women in party leadership or its organizational structure, the answers from women political representatives refered only to the increase of women's participation in the electoral meetings and consequently also to an increase of their commitment as Commissioners. While the legal obligation to respect the quota was perceived as an encouraging measure, representatives of Women's Political Forums indicated that women were not put in winning positions on the ballots during the 2009 national election. This is evidenced by the data collected in the national elections in 2009, where, for example, of the party lists of two largest parties – of which 29.3% (DP) and 28% (SP) were women - only 5.7% and 6.4% of women candidates were at the top of the list, and 23.5% and 21.4% of female candidates at the middle to bottom of the lists, respectively.[22]

The interviewees were asked if there were aware of strategies in place to increase the number of women on the candidates' lists of upcoming local elections to be held in 2011. Overall the respondents were not aware of specific plans and strategies or any initiative from the local or central chairmanship level, with the exception of the DP women's political forum in Lezhe, who declared that the Democratic League of Women has launched an awareness campaign through their website to increase the number of women in the DP Women Political Forum inviting all women to participate in all its activities.[23] SP representatives in general claimthat the forthcoming changes to their regional assembly structure will aid in improving women's representation. In all of these cases, however, it seems that the local branches are still disorganized and unclear in terms of their commitment to increased engagement of women.

Regarding the training of political parties members with respect to gender issues, only women claim to have participate in leadership and communication skills training, (mainly conducted by NGOs and international organizations), but no relevant or effective training provided by their political parties was mentioned. The chairs of the Women's Political Forums assess these training opportunities as relevant to develop leadership, communication skills and media communication, which have affected women's access to party forums and increased the general understanding of gender equality issues. On the other hand, it is estimated that many

22) ACER and ASET, "Albanian's 2009 Parliamentary Election: Monitoring the Implementation of Gender Quota and Women's Participation", page 23, Tirana, 1 September 2009

23) The respondent refers to the DP website: http://www.pd.al/ldg/

more trainings opportunities are needed to raise awareness on women's rights and their role in decision-making beyond the election campaign season. It is also recommended that the current chairmanship of local political party structures (men) should participate in trainings and receive additional training on women's rights. This is seen as a major potential factor in the support of women as leaders in local level.

2.4. Women's Participation as Candidates

Micro-survey respondents were asked if they are currently active in community activities (political forums or other community activities). A full 72.6% of them (both men and women) are involved in a variety of political structures, NGO activities, city councils and commune councils, social gatherings and public debates within their respective communities.

Non-profit organizations (NGOs), which are the most active part of civil society, have played a significant role throughout the course of Albania's recent democratic development. Though they operate within a conservative society, NGOs continue to provide services and policy analysis and to influence political decision-making. There are 614 registered associations in Albania, of which, 112 or 18.24%, are headed by women.[24]

From the total number of micro-survey respondents, those that are involved in political forums comprise 24.2%. Among those, in previous elections, 14.9% of the respondents had been candidates for parliamentary elections and 12.9% had been candidates for parliamentary election commissioners. Only 5.9% had been candidates for local elections, and 14.9% had been candidates for local elections commissioners. Thus, among respondents to the micro-survey, there was greater interest in standing for parliamentary election than for local election (14.9% to 5.9%), and less interest in standing for parliamentary commissioner than local commissioner (12.9% to 14.9%). It is assessed that the greater interest for parliamentary election candidacy is related to the power represented by this institution for the elected deputy compared to the local representation units (municipality and commune) and strictly linked with the potential candidate future career in politics if standing for parliamentary elections. While, there is less interest standing for parliamentary commissioner as generally national elections are more contested than local elections.

Potential Candidates

Even though a considerable number of respondents are engaged in community activities and political forums, and some had experience in previous elections, when asked if they would be engaged in the next local elections as candidates, 55.9% of respondents respond negatively,

24) Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Department of Gender Equality Policies, National Strategy for Gender Equality and Violence in Family 2008 – 2010.

22.5% responded positively and 18.6% were uncertain. For those who responded negatively, the reasons they gave were as follows:

- 33.9% of them are very busy with their current job;
- 11.3% are not interested in politics in general;
- 11.3% are very involved with family responsibilities; and
- 9.7% have small children and will not be engaged until the children grow up.

The following tables provide sex-disaggregated data on the previous questions. Table 6 shows that more women than men responded positively to the question about potential candidacy in the upcoming elections.

Table 7.Potential Candidacy for Local Elections of 2011

	Responses	Gender		Total	% of Total
		Women	Men		
Would you candidate for the administrative elections of 2011?	No	29	28	57	55.9
	Yes	16	7	23	22.5
	I don't know	12	7	19	18.7
	Refuse to answer	0	3	3	2.9
Total		57	45	102	100

Source: ACER, Micro-Survey

Men's and women's explanations why they would not candidate were different. The top reasons, disaggregated by sex were as follows:

Women:

1. Family responsibilities
2. Very busy with the current job
3. Do not have sufficient contacts with local political structures

Men:

1. Very busy with the current job
2. Do not have sufficient experience in politics
3. Not interested, due to disappointment

The reasons that women are uninterested or unable to stand for office reveal important differences in the constraints women and men in Albania face. The biggest challenge reported by women was "family responsibilities." Women have primary responsibility for family welfare and this - according to their perception - prevents them from standing for office. Men's roles in their families, by contrast, do not conflict with their political ambitions. The third reason women cited was a lack of "sufficient contacts with local political structures." Men did not report this; it reveals the ways in which party structures continue to be male-dominated. Interestingly, both women and men cited being "busy with the current job," which demonstrates that both women and men are significantly engaged in the work force.

When asked about the incentives that could help one to be engaged in the decision-making positions, 35.3% respondents (both women and men) indicated that being engaged in a political party would make the difference, and 13.7% referred to needing the proper academic qualifications. Being engaged in a political party remains a key factor for achieving decision-making positions and this has resulted in increasing the membership of women in political parties and their representation in party leadership bodies. Duringthe last two parliamentary elections in 2005 and 2009, political parties seemed to choose former civil society public figures to represent them politically. Of the 23 women deputies that were elected during parliamentary elections in June 2009, 10 of them had been active civil society members three women MPs from the academic sector, five from the NGO sector or interest groups, and two from arts and culture.

Potential Commissioners

When female respondents were asked about their interest in being a commissioner in the upcoming local elections, 52.9% of respondents are negative, and 33.4% are uncertain. Some of the reasons for women's low level of engagement as commissioners are listed below in order of importance:

1. "It requires more effort and I fear losing my job."
2. "A lack of confidence in the professionalism of the other commissioners."
3. "Fear of not being seen as (or accused of not being) impartial."
4. "High pressure and atmosphere that is created after the elections."
5. "Due to political pressure that was exerted on the commissioners during the elections".

Willingness to Support Female Candidates

From the total of respondents, the majority (57%) were positive in supporting women candidates in the upcoming elections of 2011, with a slight difference between men (58%) and

women (56%). While, (41%) of total respondents "*don't know*" if they would support a woman candidate, with a slight difference between women (42%) and men (40%). (*Please refer to Table no.12 in the Annex 3 of this Report for more detailed data*). From semi-structured interviews and round tables, results showthat the general trend is to vote for a political party rather than for the individual candidate. But when the last case would be considered,their decision would depend upon candidate reliability, suggesting that the candidate should represent the community where he/she stands for office and be evaluated on his or her contributions to the community.

Despite the generally low level of women representation in political parties, the interviewees in the semi-structured interviews reported success stories of women involved in politics, citing for example the MPs elected in the last parliamentary elections. It is worth mentioning that women deputies are considered as a model of positive values such as integrity and professionalism, having gained the support of their colleagues within the political party and voted with a greater share of votes by citizens, because their engagement in community activities was highly appreciated. Both men and women acknowledge the elected women MPs as representatives of women by supporting their engagement in politics. However, there are success stories of women who managed to get involved in politics as leaders their share is negligible in local politics. Some political party's representatives declared that some potential women, who were supported by the local party structures and women political forums during the last parliamentary elections, were not included in the candidate lists because these candidacies were not accepted by the national level leadership. While, on the other hand there were women who were personally proposed by political party leaders rather than from political party structures. This seems to have motivated the main political party leaders to search for new leaders, such as individuals that are supported by the community and voted by the citizens according to their political relevance.

2.5. Media Portrayal of Women in Leadership Positions

Media, particularly during election cycles, plays an important role in both disseminating information and shaping opinions. The media informs the electorate about political views, platforms and programs. When the media covers political figures and potential candidates, it conveys information about the values they represent, and their capacities.

Media outlets are not immune from the prejudices of the society at large – including gender bias. Some observers feel that the media in Albania has made some progress in terms of reporting on women leaders and decision-makers without prejudice. In the 2009 elections, for instance, several public debates were featured in the media. Female candidates participated along with male candidates, and the media presented the debates without making gender distinctions. However, there is still a great deal of evidence that demonstrates that the media provides less coverage of female candidates than male candidates and that in general, media

perpetuates gender stereotypes. When women candidates are profiled, the media – especially the local media – often focuses on private matters or the physical attributes of women (whether they are attractive), rather than issues that are relevant to the campaign.

Micro-survey respondents were asked to assess the role of the media in portraying women leaders or women candidates at local level. Based on micro-survey data, it results that respondents give to media an important role in promoting women leaders and candidates during the local elections. However, most of respondents perceive that media focus more on private issues or superficial characteristics of women leaders or potential candidates. Respondents were asked to rank the following answers in order of importance. (*Please refer to Tables in the Annex of this Report form more detailed data*).

- Media focus on private issues or superficial characteristics of women leaders or potential candidates (30%)
- Media encourage them (20.6%)
- Media is supporting more men as leaders (18.6%)
- Media does not support sufficiently the active members of the community to promote them (17.6%)

The results of a 2009 study on monitoring parliamentary elections conducted by ACER and ASET[25] are also informative. That study found that the media coverage for men and women candidates was not equal. The national media had more opportunities than the local media to cover the candidates, but in general, women appeared much less often than their male colleagues.

Research conducted by Institute for Development Research and Alternatives (IDRA) and Free Though Forum[26] (FML) and supported by Soros & National Endowment for Democracy during the 2009 parliamentary elections also found media bias. The main public and private TV channels covered mostly male politicians. When examining the data on the basis of sex, and not political affiliation, one finds that the media covered men 94% of the time, and women only 6% of the time. The major newspapers included articles about male politicians 93% of the time and women only 7% of the time. The results are presented in the below table no.8.

25) ACER and ASET, "Parliamentary elections in Albania in 2009: Monitoring of Gender Quota Implementation and Participation of Women", September 2009.

26) This study is part of the monitoring project on "Promoting Financial Transparency and Accountability of Political Parties participating in Parliamentary Elections in Albania", prepared by the Institute for Development Research and Alternatives (IDRA) and Free Thought Forum (FML) funded by Open Society Foundation for Albania SOROS Foundation and National Endowment for Democracy, August 2009, Tirana, pg. 41 - 56 Available at: www.soros.al/2010/foto/uploads/File/raporti%20final%20NED.doc

Table 8. Media Monitoring During the 2009 Parliamentary Elections

Politician			TV CHANNELS					NEWSPAPERS				
	Sex	P. Party	Top Chanel	Klan TV	TVSH	Vizion Plus	News 24	Shekulli	Gazeta Shqiptare	Shqip	Panorama	Koha jone
			Sincron (Sek)[27]					**Quotation** (cm2)[28]				
Edi Rama	M	SP	6727	6099	6266	4597	12076	4779	7351	3619	6435	7355
Sali Berisha	M	DP	6322	27313	20264	5698	7229	3706	10079	4574	8704	18319
Ilir Meta	M	SMI	1928	3129	3471	1780	2715	135	2686	1697	5418	3395
Bamir Topi	M	President	1840		2172	1148	2600					
Jozefina Topalli	F	DP	1400	2307	4499	895		867	1348	850	1912	2075
Erjon Velia	M	G99	1257			836	2099	142	1393	703		
Lulëzim Basha	M	DP		2290	2241					429	867	
Sokol Olldashi	M	DP		2177								
Aldo Bumci	M	DP		1868	2598							
Skënder Gjinushi	M	SDP				918	1472		1537	461		2073
Gramoz Ruci	M	SP						369		321		
Fatmir Mediu	M	RP								939		
Majlinda Bregu	F	DP								268		

Source: Institute for Development Research and Alternatives (IDRA) and Free Thought Forum

Note: ACER calculations based on data provided at IDRA and FML Report "Promoting Financia Transparency and Accountability of Political Parties participating in Parliamentary Elections in Albania", August 2009

27) ***"Sincron" or Synchronous**: refers to the airtime that the media gives politicians to express their political opinions with their own voice. This category includes interviews and reports directly by politicians.*

28) ***Quotation**: refers to column space in which a journalist uses or re-tells in the subject's own words.*

3. Political Parties and Implementation of the Quota at the Local Level

Political parties are the primary mechanism through which women and men access elected office and political leadership. Therefore, the structures, practices, and policies of political parties dictate, to a large extent, the level of women's participation in governance.

In Albania, efforts to respect the gender quota within the political parties' structures have been strengthened by involving more women in recent years. The number of women candidates on the electoral lists in June 2009 had significantly increased since the previous national election, but still fell short of the 30% envisioned in the law "On Gender Equality in Society". It is important to note that there was a marked increase of women representation as commissioner, with the two largest parties exceeding the 30% quota for commissioners on the day of the elections (32.1%/DP and 37%/SP of commissioners were women)[29].

At the national level, both DP and SP have approved the gender quota to be implemented within the organizational structure of their respective political parties, as declared in both their party statutes (see Annex 2). In the course of this research, the party leadership structures (boards, councils, etc.) at local level were examined in each region. The statistical data on women's participation gathered in the different regions throughout Albania reveals that, despite formal approval by the parties, the quota has not been fully implemented and they differ significantly by regions. (*see section .3.2.*)

The current situation of women's representation in local decision-making institutions is provided in the table below. The female participation is at its peak after the local elections of 2000 when there were five municipal mayors. In the 2003 election no woman was elected mayor and in 2007, there was only one woman (Mayor in Shijak municipality)[30]. From 11 minimunicipalities of Tirana district only 3 Heads of Municipality were women in 2003 and the same recorded in 2007. The number of women as Heads of Commune[31] is also low, in 2007 local elections the number of women elected is the same as in the 2003 elections – women make up 5 heads of commune from 308 (about 2%).

29) ACER and ASET, "Albania's 2009 Parliamentary Election:Monitoring the Implementation of Gender Quota and Women's Participation – NGOs' View", page 27, September 2009

30) CEC, "Administrative Election Results - 2007", Available at: http://www.cec.org.al/2004/zgjedhvendorefiles/2007/Rezultatet/rezultate%20perfundimtare/kryetar.pdfl

31)Commune of Kajan/ Elbasan; Commune of Fratar/ Mallakaster; Commne of Fshat Memmaliaj/ Tepelene; Commune of Ndroq/Tirane; Commune of Hore Vranisht/ Vlore

Table 9. Women Representation in Previous Local Elections (%)

Position	2000		2003		2007	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Mayor	92.3	7.7	100	0	98.5	1.5
Head of Mini-Municipalities	72.7	27.3	72.7	27.3	72.7	27.3
Head of District	91.7	8.3	100	0	100	0
Head of Commune	98.7	1.3	97.7	2.3	98.3	1.7
Head of Municipality Council*	N/A	N/A	84	16	85	15
Head of Commune Council*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Members of Municipality Councils*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	87	13
Members of Commune Councils*	85.8	14.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: MoLSAEO, Directorate of Policies for Equal Opportunities

Note: Data is not available*

Referring to local elections in 2007, it is observed that the overall representation of women as members of municipality councils throughout the country (data is available for 59 municipalities out of 66) is only 13 percent (167 women out of 1265 total members) and 15 percent as Chairwoman (9 Chairwomen of the Municipality Councils out of 59). The participation of women as members of municipality councils is higher in Tirana (31%), Lushnje (29%), followed by municipalities of Memaliaj (29%), Puka (29%), Selenice (27%), and Korca (26%) and lower in municipalities of Cerrik, Librazhd, Bulqize, Burrel, Polican, Himare, Orikum and Delvina (6% each). (Please refer to the Table 14. In Annex 4 of this Report)

3.1. General Level of Knowledge and Acceptance of Gender Quota by Political Parties at the Local Level

As explained earlier, the gender quota is defined in the Electoral Code, and provides a special formula for ranking candidates by gender in candidate lists. Article 67, Section 5 says that at the parliamentary level, "for each electoral zone[32] at least thirty percent of the multinominal

32) Referring to Law no.10019, dated 29.12.2008 "Election Code of the Republic of Albania", Article 2 states the definition of electoral zones: "electoral zone" is the administrative-territorial division of the Region for the parliamentary Elections and Administrative Elections (municipal and communes) for elections of local government units.

list *and/or* one of the first three names of the multinominal list must belong to each gender."[33] The Electoral Code further stipulates that in elections for local government, *one out of every three names* on the list must belong to each gender.[34] Thus, the gender quota is stronger at the local level than at the national level. The Election Code also establishes sanctions for local-level lists when the quota is not respected – a fine of 30,000 ALL[35] will be imposed by CEC for each electoral administrative zone[36]

Overall, the DP representatives interviewed for this study indicated a willingness to respect the gender quota at all levels of party local structures and to improve women's representation, especially in the northern areas of the country where the women representation is low at 10-20%. The SP representatives indicated that they have plans to increase the women representation beyond 30% -- up to 50%. SP believes that the gender quota has been implemented in their party statute since the parliamentary elections of June 2009. When asked, all respondents acknowledged and made reference to the inclusion of gender quotes in their own party statutes regarding the internal organization of the party structure towards women.

Despite this stated willingness to comply with the quota, the analysis gathered through semi-structured interviews shows that representatives of the parties' local branches have only a general level of information about the parties' legal obligations towards the implementation of the legislation or Electoral Code as it relates to the gender quota. It was observed that party officials' responses were "politically correct" and rather formal. Respondents were unable to provide details, however, when they were asked about differences in the Electoral Code's stipulations for implementation of the gender quota in administrative elections in comparison

33) Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Law no. 10019, dated 29.12.2008, Section 175, "Sanctions in relation to Gender Equality", available at: http://www.cec.org.al/2004/legjislacion/kodi%20i%20ri/kodi%20zgjedhor.pdf

34) Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 67, Available at: www.osce.org/item/14076.html

35) Electoral Code/Article 175 '*Sanctions related to gender equality*', 'Failure by the electoral subject to fulfil the obligations provided in the last sentence of point 6 of article 67 of this Code, is fined with ALL 30 000 by the CEC for each electoral zone'.

36) *Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Article 27 "Electoral Administration Zones"*
1. Electoral Administration Zones (EAZ) are established and function in accordance with this Code for every kind of election and referendum.
2. The territorial jurisdiction of an EAZ, as a rule, is the same as the administrative district according to the law regulating the territorial organization of the Republic of Albania. Districts that have more than 70 000 citizens with the right to vote are divided by the CEC into more than one Electoral Administration Zone based on the following criteria:
a) the inseparability of the territory of a commune and municipality;
b) the contiguity and compactness of the territory, while avoiding the geographical barriers;
c) good possibilities for transport within the territory; and
ç) approximate number of voters.
6. The CEC, not later than 5 months before the election date, may change the boundaries of an EAZ in accordance with the requirements of this article only if there is a change in the criteria for their establishment according to points 2, 3 and 4 of this article.

with parliamentary elections during the drafting the candidate lists phase respondents were not able to provide details. Based on the responses, it was evident that the representatives of political parties and the chairs of Women's Political Forums have only superficial knowledge on the LGE and on the mechanisms for the quota as laid out in the Electoral Code. Most of the respondents are aware of the 30% quota, but they did not know how this should be achieved.

In relation to the sanctions imposed by the Electoral Code for non-compliance with the gender quota, the majority of the interviewees did not have knowledge about the sanctions as provided in the "Law for Gender Equality in Society" (LGE) and by the Central Electoral Commisssion (CEC). It should be noted that the chairs of the Women's Political Forums are rather skeptical about implementation of sanctions and their role, based on their view of the way sanctions were handled during the recent parliamentary election. As noted elsewhere in this report, the experience of the parliamentary elections of June 2009 demonstrated that the refusal of the lists of candidates by the CEC was more effective than imposing a neglible fine of 30000 ALL to those parties which did not comply with the legislative measure. ACER posits that during the parliamentary elections, the most important sanction was and remains the CEC's refusal of lists of candidates from parties that did not respect the requirements of the law on quotas. The chairs of local party branches indicated in the course of their interviews that the sanctions for non-compliance with the quota law were important instruments for encouraging implementation of the quota. The interviewed women of Women Political Forums predicted that though, at this point, the quotas are necessary to artificially increase the number of women in political parties, over time women will come to be respected for their contributions to the party and neither the quota nor the sanctions will be necessary.

Results of the semi-structured interviews show strong support for the legislation that sustains and promotes gender equality in Albania and that the gender quota is considered an important measure at this time. The data shows that no differences exist between the political parties regarding the level of their knowledge but there are considerable discrepancies between local political party leaders and chairs of the local Women's Political Forums when it comes to awareness about quota-related issues.

The interviews indicate that women are aware of the Electoral Code and gender quota, but do not have access to information about parties' plans to *implement* the gender quota because they are not sufficiently represented on the local party leadership boards. This is due to their under-representation in the local political parties' decision-making structures (chairmanships and leadership boards "kryesia"), which impede their access to information on important political decisions. When asked if they have received concrete instructions from the party leadership in the implementation of gender quotas and gender equality issues in general, in the majority of cases women referred the interviewer to respective changes in their party statutes, but were unable to elaborate. It is worth mentioning that all political parties' representatives, from both the left and right wing, gave approximately the same responses.

Based on provided responses, women compared to men members of same political party have different perceptions of the implementation of the gender quotas within the local political party's structures. Thus, men (the chairs of local parties' branches, with the exception of the SP chair in Elbasan who is a woman) tend to provide more official figures and appear "politically correct" when referring to their engagement with the gender quota in the upcoming administrative (local) elections. Their engagement relies on the willingness to propose women candidates by respecting the 30% quota in line with main political party leadership commitment. Women (chairs of the Women's Political Forums) are more skeptical about whether the gender quota will be respected in the upcoming local elections. In their responses, women referred to the current situation of their under-representation in decision-making structures.

A considerable number of local political representatives (mostly men) mentioned that there is lack of interest and willingness of women themselves to get involved in local elections. Some of the reasons they provided are: women have insufficient time to deal with politics; the political parties do not support women; the media do not promote women; the existing problems of a conservative mentality in rural areas; a backward patriarchal mentality in general, and a lack of support from women within the political parties' structures.

Among those who believe that quotas will be partially respected, men and women give different reasons. The most important and frequently cited reasons are:

- A conservative mentality in society (cited by two-thirds of women, and less frequently by men);
- Aggressiveness and a lack of support from party structures and leadership (cited by two-thirds of women, and less frequently by men);
- Women's family duties (50% of men and 50% of women cited this reason); and
- A lack of willingness on the part of women (50% of men and 50% of women cited this reason).

3.2. Political Parties' Plans to Improve Women's Participation in Decision-Making Bodies

Status of Women in the Parties

If one refers to the table below on the representation of women in local political party structures, women - although numerous as members of the Women's Political Forums; are underrepresented in higher levels of party decision-making. The political party structure differ from each other (*please refer to Annex 2 for further information*), as such DP data refers to the composition of "*Kryesia*" (leadership board) at the regional level; SP data refers to the "Kryesia" at the district level; they both are composed of few people representing the

decision-making body of the party at local level*. Collection of this data has been a challenge to the research team. Reliable, comprehensive and official disaggregated data on women in local political parties structures at local level (headship boards, assembly, forums, etc.) is totally missing. So ACER, in order to formulate a comprehensive analysis, had to rely on approximate figures provided by local political party representatives collected from ACER local coordinators during the semi structured interviews and direct communication.

Table 10. Participation of women in leadership structure of political party's local branches by region[37]

Political Parties	DP		SP		SMI		RP	
	Female %	W. Pol. Forum Number	Female %	W. Pol. Forum Number	Female %	W. Pol. Forum Number	Female %	W. Pol. Forum Number
ELBASAN	36	500	40	420	23.8	37	N/A	N/A
KORCE	26	600	28	920	N/A	N/A	40	300
SHKODER	21	500	14	250	20	150	14	N/A
KUKES	20	250	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
DIBER	12	230	25	150	20	68	N/A	N/A
LEZHE	42	500	25	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BERAT	30	700	20	300	24	500	33	300
DURRES	22	N/A	40	1000	23.3	84	26	N/A
VLORE	23	N/A	24*	N/A	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
FIER	N/A	N/A	26*	N/A	17	N/A	N/A	N/A
GJIROKASTER	33	3150	33	100	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
TIRANA**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average	26.5		28		19		28	

Source: ACER, Data collected through Semi-Structured Interviews[38]

**Figures refer to women' representation at the regional and district level of political parties' structure ("Kryesia").*

*** In Tirana data is available only for SP membership, where women compose 29%; and head of local organization units, where women compose 26%.*

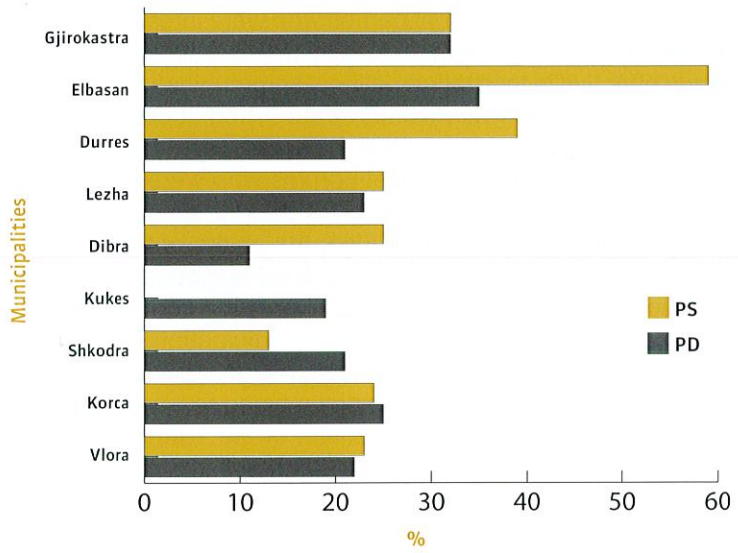
37) At the time of implementation of this study SP was in the process of composing a different local structure called the "Assembly" at the regional level.

38) Statistical data was collected by the interviewers (ACER local coordinators) during interviews with local political leaders, on the basis of semi-structured interviews, but in many cases, the small political parties have no clear data, especially about thenumber of members of women's forums.

As it is noticed, the overall figures show that the political parties from both wings have positive results in respecting gender quota in their local leadership structures. As such, in 6 out of 12 regions of Albania at least one of the monitored political parties has exceeded 30% of quota, respectively in Lezhë, Elbasan, Korcë, Durrës, Gjirokastër and Berat. The highest gender quota is observed in Lezha with 42% (DP) followed by Elbasan and Durres with 40% each (SP); and Korcë with 40% (RP); Gjirokastra with 33% (by both DP and SP); and Berat with 33% (RP) and 30% (DP). The lowest gender figures results in Vlora with 7% (SMI); Diber with 12% (DP); followed by Shkoder with 14% (SP and RP each); and Fier with 17% (SMI).

This data confirm that in specific regions political parties have shown good will to implement the quota, however on average throughout the country women representation in local branches of political parties is still below the critical mass of 30%. Further efforts are needed from political parties to apply equally throughout the regions the provisions of their respective statutes with reference to gender quota implementation.

Graph 1. Women's Participation in Political Parties Local Branches' Leadership Boards by Region (%)



Source: ACER[39]

39) This data was collected by ACER's local coordinators during semi-structured interviews with local political leaders. In many cases, particularly the smaller parties, there was no available data about the level of women's participation in their structures.

Based on the reported data from the interviews, there is a womanchair (head) of the local SP branch at the "qark" or regional level in Elbasan. In all other regions interviewed, men head all other local branches of political parties throughout Albania. There are no reports of women heading local DP branches. Among the smaller political parties, in some cases, they do not even have Women's Political Forums.

Thus, the role of women in the highest decision-making bodies of political parties' local branches is inadequate. From the women's perspective there is an underestimation of their contributions and capacities. Male leaders consistently refer to women's participation in political events and to their positions as consultants or vice-chairs, but are largely unable to mention a specific decision-making position held by a woman. Looking ahead to 2011, a number of women interviewed for this study affirmed their availability and willingness to be involved as voters and candidates, but their involvement is dependent upon the level of support they receive from party leadership. The main channel for promoting women candidates and increasing their representation in politics and public administration remains the political parties.

Views of Male and Female Party Members

Two-thirds of the (mostly male) representatives of political parties who were interviewed in the semi-structured interviews assessed women's involvement in local political activities as positive. Women are seen as particularly effective in facilitating political communication, organization, and disseminating political ideas. However, when women were asked about the current level of their involvement in parties, two-thirds asserted that their roles were not influential or sufficient. According to the chairs of the Women's Political Forums who were interviewed, this is due to the fact that women are not properly represented in the parties' local governing bodies, especially in the northern parts of the country. Also, the chairs of the Women's Political Forums affirm that their commitment to the party is welcomed and supported by the party leadership – but only during the election campaign period. Then, their contributions are necessary for electoral campaign management, organization and participation in campaign activities. Given this, women across all parties have relatively low confidence in party chairs' ability to properly appreciate their roles and willingness to appoint women to leadership positions within their relative party structures. According to the chairs of the Women's Political Forums, this was reflected in the party candidate lists during the 2009 parliamentary elections when women were ranked at the middle and bottom of the candidate lists. The most common positions for women in local party branches are Chair of the Women's Political Forum and Deputy Head of the local branch, but the latter position varies by region. There are more women deputy heads in Korca and Elbasan (the central region) and fewer in Kukes and Dibra (northern Albania).

In the political parties' structure at local level, this research focused also on the role of Women's Political Forums[40] as an important source of providing qualified women with leadership capacities. The Chairs of these Forums highlighted the fact that the Forums operate with a very limited budget and have no particular role in the decision-making of the party. They report that their role is limited only if supporting the local chairmanship in political events throughout the election campaign or in political party activities organized by women at the central level chairmanship. This was reported by women across all parties.

Plans for Quota Implementation in 2011

When asked if their party is taking any measures to support women's advancement and commitment within the political party in view of upcoming local elections, the majority of (mostly male) local party chairs referred formally to the general changes in the Electoral Code that established the quota for local structures. They were unable to provide any concrete information or report that they had received guidance from the central level party leadership about how to increase the number of women as candidates.

3.3. Progress and Obstacles to the Implementation of the Gender Quota

At the local level, the political parties are structured in much the same way that the national parties are structured. Each party pursues its own organization. The structural units of the two main parties are presented here.

DP:

Chairmanship
The National Council
Local Branch
Sub-Branch
Chairmanship of the Local Branch
Group Section
Section

40) The Women's Political Forums are voluntary organizations of Albanian women based on the principles and values of their political parties, which they support as partner organizations. While the Women's Forums are formally acknowledged in party statutes, they have no decision-making authority. With the exception of the Chair of the Women's Forum, its members are not active within the party leadership.

SP:

Chairmanship
Secretariat
National Assembly
The regional Assembly (municipalities and communes)
The local organization/units
The leadership of local organizations

This organizational structure shows that due to changes in the electoral system, the main political parties have adapted their organization to the local level, decentralizing it in order to be closer to the electorate.

When asked to identify some possible obstacles that may hinder the participation of women in senior managerial positions of decision-making, representatives of local political party's branches and the chairperson of the Women's Political Forums provided similar responses, (following) listed in order of significance:

- Mentality of the society in general;
- Lack of capacities, especially in rural areas;
- Unfair competition between women andmen;
- Aggressiveness of political environment;
- Lack of support from other women.

Women only evaluated the main obstacles as being:

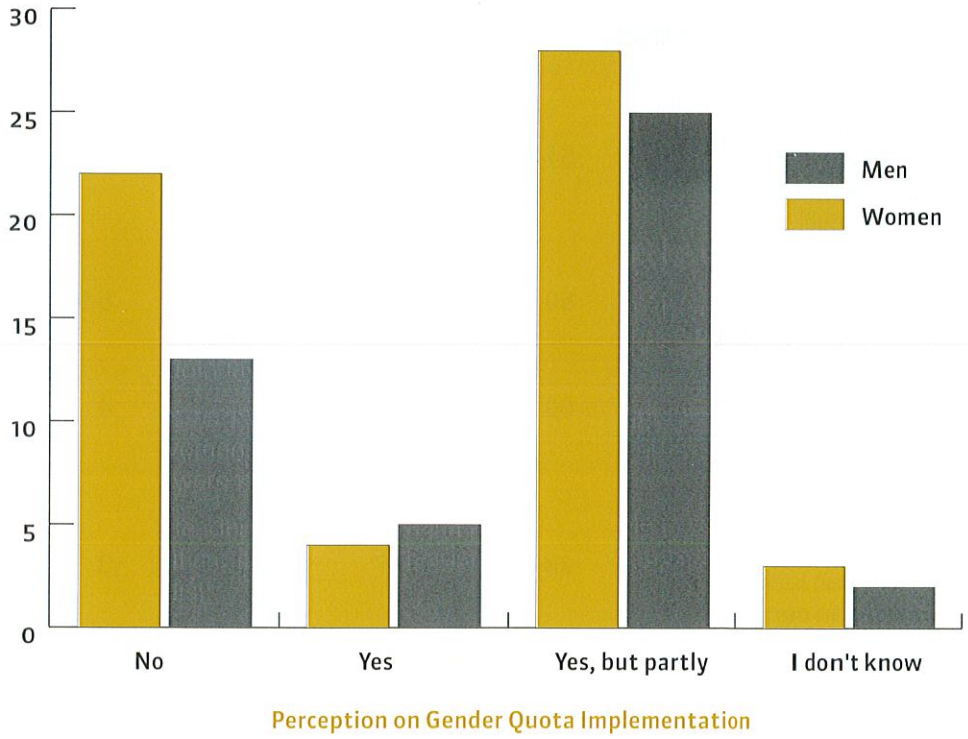
- Patriarchal mentality of men;
- Low level of women representation in the highest political parties units of decision-making;
- Lack of support by the leadership and lack of political will.

3.4. Perceptions about Implementation of the Gender Quota in Upcoming Local Administrative Elections

When asked about the implementation of the gender quota in the 28 June 2009 parliamentary election, only 9 percent of respondents in the micro-survey said that the quota had been fully implemented. 34 percent said the quota had not been not respected, and 52 percent reported that it had been partially implemented. More women than men were skeptical about the implementation of the quota, as shown in the graph below.

Graph 2. Perceptions of the Gender Quota Implementation in 2009

"What is your perception on gender quota implementation in the parliamentary elections of June 2009?"



Source: ACER, Micro-Survey

Preparations for the local elections had not yet begun when this survey was conducted. With respect to the expected political commitment to implement the gender quota in the upcoming local election, 45% of respondents, when asked if political parties will respect the gender quota, said "yes, but partly"; 10% said "yes" and 25% said "no"; 19.6% said "I don't know".

Those who said "no" (i.e. the quota would not be implemented) gave the following reasons:

- "The final lists of candidates were a decision of the political parties at central level.";
- "There are not enough potential women candidates.";
- "It is the patriarchal mindset of society that prevents women to be engaged and self-promoted in politics at the local level.".

Table 11. Reasons why the quota will not be respected, among those who said "no"

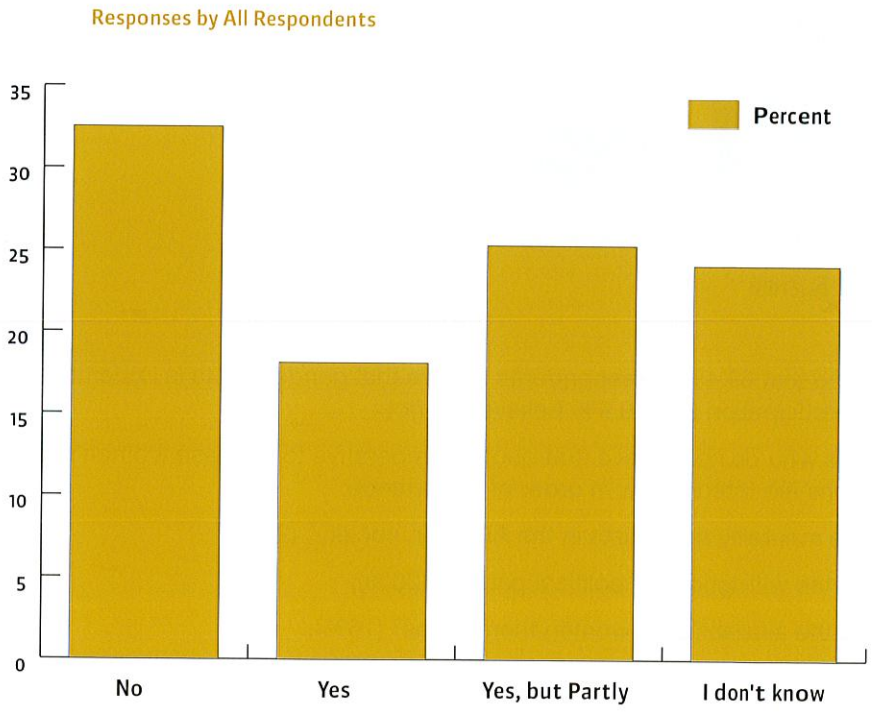
		Gender				Total	%	Percent of the total
		Female	%	Male	%			
If not, what are the reasons	The final lists of candidates were a decision of the political parties at central level	7	54	6	46	13	50	12.7
	There is not enough potential women candidates	3	50	3	50	6	23.1	5.9
	The patriarchal mindset of society	2	50	2	50	4	15	4
	Other: "Women are engaged in family duties" for females & "Women lack organization capacities" for males	1	33	2	67	3	11.5	3
Total		13	50	13	50	26	100.0	25

Source: ACER Micro-Survey

Many respondents observed that the political parties' local branches do not have the necessary independence and room to promote the women with leadership capacity and list them as candidates. Additionally, respondents provided a number of open responses to this question, including skepticism about the mechanisms that will be used to implement the gender quota. Respondents were asked if they had been informed about any specific plan or strategy that political parties at the local level have to increase the involvement of women in their local structures and decision-making positions. Their responses indicate they have little or no information on the activities of political policies in this regard. Given that 42% of respondents are self-identified as politically active, and thus are likely to be relatively well-informed of party activities, their responses indicate a significant gap or absence of planning with regard to quota implementation.

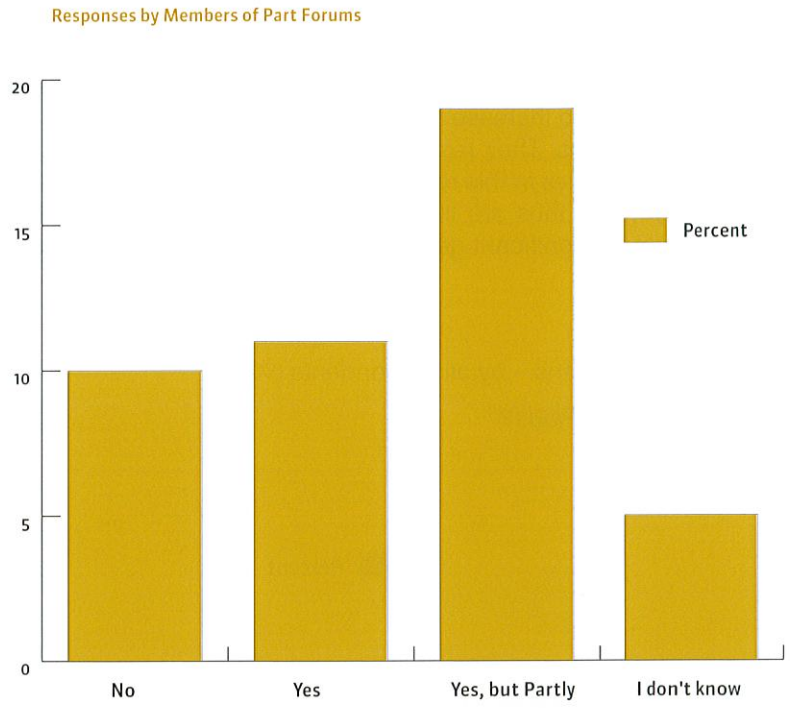
Graph 3. Information on Political Parties' Plans – by all respondents (%)

"Do you have information on Political Party Plans?"



Source: ACER, Micro-Survey

Graph 4. Information on Political Parties' Plans – by members of Party Forums (%)



Source: ACER, Micro-Survey

The micro-survey found that 69.4% of respondents believe that gender quota is imperative in increasing women's participation and 29.4% believe it is not.

For those respondents who do not believe that quote is imperative to increase women's representation, the reasons are listed below in order of importance:

- "Conservative mentality that exists in the Albanian society" (29%);
- "Depends on the willingness of political parties" (26%);
- "Depends on the availability of women themselves" (16%);
- "Quota is not applicable in practice" (10%).

The responses of the respondents to this question were largely retrospective, referring to the role the quota had played in the previous parliamentary elections, when the gender quota had

been applied for the first time. That resulted in 23 women elected to parliament, compared to 10 in the previous legislature. This perception is in reference to the fact that the Electoral Code's quota for national lists gave two options – 30 percent of the list and/or 1 of the first three names. In most of the cases, women candidates were included at the bottom of the candidate list, where the chances to be selected were minimal. The Electoral Code requires that each list of candidates include at least 30 percent of candidates from each gender, or one of the first three candidates must be from each gender. In the parliamentary elections in 2009, 43 percent of the lists respected both criteria. Three lists of candidates were registered without respecting any criterion, respectively the lists of Social Democracy Party and New Democracy Party in Lezha, and the list of National Front Democratic Party in Berat.[41]

Another important factor noted by the respondents regarding political parties' willingness to respect the quota, in addition to the 30% quota on candidate lists in parliamentary and administrative elections, was the willingness to implement the 30% of gender quota in the decision-making institutions of local government units[42] where currently the representation of women is very low.

While assessing the role of women currently involved in local structures of political parties, almost half of the respondents 44.1% believe that women are used as a facade for political parties, 30.4% believe that women best fulfill the duties and evaluate their accountability and reliability in completion of obligations, and the rest of respondents identify them as best representing women's rights. Regarding the support that women leaders give to other women to be engaged in political parties structures, 63.4 percent of respondents believe that they partly support each other, 20.8 percent believe they do not support at all each other, and only 14.8 percent affirm their support for other women.

Albanian society has a very conservative past. Albanian public opinion is still, in general, discouraging, unappreciative, skeptical and prejudicial towards women's capacities of leadership and decision-making. Addressing the major challenges a woman might face as a candidate in the local elections, respondents rank in order of importance:

- men's aggressiveness in politics (42.6%);
- lack of support from the public opinion mentality / friends / family (37.6%);
- low level of law implementation in general (5%);
- lack of support from their political leadership (5%).

41) Available at: http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2009/09/39545_en.pdf

42) Law No.9970, date 24.07.2008 "Gender Equality in Society," Article 15 "*Participation in the decision making process*"
1. Equal gender participation and representation in all legislative, executive, judicial power bodies as well as in other public institutions shall be achieved when:
a) A representation of above 30% of both sexes is ensured, including their steering bodies is ensured;
b) Equal observation of competition procedures and criteria for both genders for the assignments in these bodies is ensured.

Results of this research show that the mentality, in itself, has an inhibitive role and makes women encounter difficulties, especially in competition with men dominating the government bodies.

3.5. Potential Approaches to Support the Process

Regarding women's participation in previous local elections both as candidates and commissioners,[43] respondents believed that women were particularly entrusted as commissioners because they are viewed as less corrupt than men. This is in line with data and case study evidence globally that indicates that electorates view women leaders as less corrupt than men, and particularly effective in promoting honest government, either from within or as civil society activists.[44]

Despite the increase in women commissioners, in Albania in 2009, women were not supported to the same extent as candidates or in leading decision-making positions in public administration. Women and men view this discrepancy differently:

Comments fom women on women's roles:

- women are supported as a Commissioner because they are perceived as correct, devoted, serious, less corrupt;
- as candidates in elections, however, they are perceived as opponents of men.

Comments from men on women's roles:

- women are assessed as trustworthy and less corrupt;
- there is no difference between the way they are perceived as commissioners or candidates, rather it is an issue of their capacity and commitment.

43) Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania, Chapter II "Electoral Administration Zones (EAZ) and Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones (CEAZ), Article 27 "Administration of Electoral Zones" Article 2 *'**Definition**', point 8, 'A "CEAZ" is a Commission of an Electoral Administration Zone, which is established and functions in accordance with this Code for the elections to the Assembly of Albania and for Local Elections'.*
*Article 29 '**Composition of CEAZ**', point ç) '30 percent of the members proposed respectively by the largest party of the majority and by the largest party of the opposition nationwide must be from each gender'.*
*For more details see Article 33'**Duties of the CEAZ**'*

44) Anderlini, Sanam Naraghi. '*Women Building Peace: What They Do, Why It Matters*'. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007.

Respondents believe that in order to increase women's participation as candidates and commissioners, the local political parties' structures should better assess women's capacities as per education level, level of commitment and management ability, while reducing aggressiveness in politics, implementing the gender quota in decision-making, and finally improving the mentality of society in general.

In regard to the upcoming local elections, political parties' representatives were asked if they were expecting future reorganization or restructuring of their local branches to accommodate women's participation. Most of the DP representatives interviewed, both party leaders and Women's Political Forum chairs, did not have specific information at that time (although since completing the interviews, the DP has begun the process). However, they declared their commitment to their party statutes and respect for the gender quota in local structures. SP representatives indicated that they expect some changes in the organizational structure of the assemblies at district level, reaffirming the aim to increase women's participation to more than 30%. It's worth mentioning that for various internal reasons (e.g. lack of democracy and the ruling of "the leader"), but also for reasons related to the general situation of the country (lack of participation of the opposition in the National Parliament) the elections within the SP local units were delayed several times in the last year.

When asked what potential approaches could facilitate or better enhance the implementation of gender quotas, the respondents referred to respecting the Electoral Code with regard to candidate lists, as well as commissioners. Besides the sanctions imposed by the law, the respondents assessed the positive role of local NGOs in advocating for gender equality and approaching those political parties who do not respect the gender quota as established by the Electoral Code.

In order to address enhance implementation of the quota, interviewees suggested the following measures to be considered in solving the issue for the upcoming local elections:

- rigorous implementation of the law by all commissioners;
- selection of commissioners who are as educated as possible;
- commissioners should not represent political forces or parties to the electoral process, but they should be technical experts of different fields, to guarantee the rule of law;
- commissioners should receive extensive training;
- awareness raising on the issue of "family voting" beyond just the period of the electoral campaign.

4. Regional Roundtables

The regional roundtable meetings gathered representatives from the respective regions, including representatives of local governance institutions, leaders of local branches of the political parties, gender activists and members of women's political forums, local NGOs leaders, civil society representatives, university staff, students, media and representatives of businesses (women entrepreneurs), as well as associations of producers/agrobusiness. The goal of these meetings was to discuss the key findings of the semi-structured interviews and the micro-survey while identifying additional challenges and opportunities to increase women's participation in decision-making and politics at local level. As described in the methodology section above, this participant-observer research process allowed ACER to collect additional data, while simultaneously raising awareness about women's roles in society and identifying successful women leaders with the capacity and potential to be local officials.

In addition, participants in regional meetings were asked to suggest some potential women candidates according to their assessement to candidate in the upcoming local elections. ACER has built a database with 300 names of potential women candidates based on estimates received from community members for each visited region. This is a good resource of potential and available candidates. .

A summary of findings for each regional roundtableis provided below. The regions are listed in alphabetical order. These summaries highlight key responses and findings from each region. It is important to note that many of the regions shared similar challenges and responses. Below there are just some key issues raised in each, but may not be specific to those regions but in fact shared by many regions of the country.

RESULTS OF BERAT REGION ROUNDTABLE

- The majority of those in decision-making positions at the local level in Berat are men. There is some resistance to a further commitment to women in politics;
- The aggressive nature of politics, their relatively lower economic status, and the nature of a transitional democracy inhibit women's involvement in politics;
- Women do not have confidence in themselves; there is a need for activities and instruments that are designed to build women's capacity and thus their confidence;
- There is jealousy and rivalry between women, but they can be supportive of each other, especially those who have reached decision-making positions;
- Women need more access to the media in order to promote themselves.
- It is necessary to train people in decision-making positions (both men and women) in relation to gender equality and the implementation of gender quota, especially those leaders who decide on the list of candidates and the ranking/order;

- Leaders of the political parties should ensure that candidate lists for administrative elections as well as parliamentary election include women from the Berat Region who have lived, worked, and contributed there, not candidates from other regions of Albania who are "imported" by party leadership boards and committees.

RESULTS OF DIBRA REGION ROUNDTABLE

- Women need to be made aware of their rights and should fight to improve their role and status in society;
- In urban areas there are very strong women who are potential candidates, but they need to be encouraged and facilitated by the establishment of institutions and mechanisms to enter politics;
- There is a general understanding in Dibra about the gender quota's 30% requirement.
- The most critical factors for encouraging the participation of women in politics are their intellectual skills, support of their families, and media promotion;
- The society in Diber is very patriarchal and conservative. Especially in remote rural areas, there are not enough women involved in politics. Parties do not believe they can fulfill the 30% quota with qualified women interested in politics.

RESULTS OF DURRES REGION ROUNDTABLE

- Participants feel strongly that the CEC's ability to refuse candidate lists is a stronger and more effective sanction than the fine for those political parties that do not respect the quota law;
- Durres had very low numbers of women candidates in the 2007 local election; only one woman out of the three major political parties (MSI) won and in the communes there were no women elected;
- Party leadership (mostly male) plays a key role in determining women's participation in politics; it is the party leadership that decides on the candidates' names for the party list;
- Within the party structures at the local level, the participation of women has increased in recent years. The SP members in Durres comprise 30% of women currently, compared with 11% in the past, due to changes in the party's statutes. The gender quota has become a basic criteria in local organizations, but is not yet respected among the top leadership;
- More voter and civic education is needed, particularly with an emphasis on women's

rights and women's political participation. This is especially needed in schools and universities to challenge and address discriminatory stereotypes;

- Stereotypes related to women candidates persist, including the belief that women have insufficient links to politics and lack capacity. But participants in the roundtable believed that this was a result of a lack of female public figures from the region: a lack of role models. The identification of potential women leaders in the community is critical.

RESULTS OF ELBASAN REGION ROUNDTABLE

- The composition of the candidates' list depends entirely on the will and preference of party leadership; male candidates are believed by party leaders to have better contacts and financial resources, and win more votes. This prevents women candidates from appearing on the lists;
- The review of the Electoral Code was a positive step, but there must also be other instruments to ensure implementation of the gender quota;
- The aggressive nature of politics and "verbal violence" in the media are seen as factors that inhibit women's political participation;
- The media promotes men more than women; journalists should be trained on gender issues and women's rights and encouraged to report on the issues that women candidates promote, not on personal matters;
- Young women should be engaged in political forums to increase the representation of women;
- Most voters choose according to political parties; only a small percentage of voters consider the individual candidates or the individual's program.

RESULTS OF FIER REGION ROUNDTABLE

- In the view of roundtable participants, women face resistance from a conservative society and often lack the support of their families. Being a wife and mother requires a lot of time and work; it is difficult for women to engage in politics and spend time away from home or overcome her family's objections to her absences for political meetings;
- During campaigns, the media often plays a decisive role. But often women do not appear on the media programs at all, or significantly less than men. When they do appear in the media, often the focus is on women's personal characteristics, not her political platforms;

- Too often, women are rivals and are not supportive of each other. Some anecdotes were reported from the 2009 campaigns which indicated that during the campaign, women were more likely to cooperate with men rather than with other women.

RESULTS OF GJIROKASTRA REGION ROUNDTABLE

- Party leaders play the determining role with regard to women's political participation; leaders decide who goes on the candidate lists;
- Women should be more aggressive and fight for their rights; they should not expect that men will provide these rights as a gift;
- One way to increase the representation of women in politics is to identify and engage potential women leaders within the political forums, and ensure their promotion;
- There is a need for more civic education on gender issues, women's participation in politics, and information about stereotypes, especially in universities and high schools.

RESULTS OF KORCA REGION ROUNDTABLE

- Women's political forums include well qualified women, with the intellectual capacity and integrity. They are seen as competitors to men, who remain a major obstacle to their participation in decision-making and politics;
- In meetings of political parties at the local level, often women do not have the self-confidence to openly oppose men or the party leadership. They do not join in discussions about candidate lists;
- There are also women who do not support each other. This is due to the fact that women also vote for the political parties rather than according to a candidate's capacities or skills;
- Candidate lists should include women from their own regions because the female electorate will be greater if the candidates are seen as more reliable and more responsive to local voters.

RESULTS OF KUKES REGION ROUNDTABLE

- Women should be more aggressive and lobby more.
- There is a need to increase awareness and further engage women voters, particularly

in rural areas. Most women voters in Kukes are not yet aware of the importance of their vote and they misuse it. Although family voting has decreased, women are still likely to vote based on the opinions of their spouse or head of household;

- The Kukes City Council has only one woman. The public interest would be served if this number increased, because men often decide to use public expenditures on football and sports grounds instead of on acute problems in the community. Participants believed that an increase in women's participation would improve local governance and increase access to social services;
- The legal sanctions in relation to the implementation of gender quota by the political parties should be reviewed and handled differently;
- Participants also stressed the role and responsibility of women as commissioners, where they stand for fairness and devotion;
- Despite the difficulties encountered in the region of Kukes (conservatism and patriarchy), the role of women in public life has increased and the opening of the University of Tirana branch in Kukes will probably influence women's access to education and increase their awareness about women's rights;
- Women in decision-making positions often do not get support from their colleagues or even their families. This is a major obstacle to women in Kukes.

RESULTS OF LEZHA REGION ROUNDTABLE

- The Electoral Code should be strengthened. As it is, the 30% quota is for candidates, not for participation in elected bodies. The quota should be strengthened to mandate that all elected bodies include 30% women;
- Women should more aggressively seek their rights and not expect that these rights will be granted;
- Politics would become more moderate if there were more women as leaders;
- There should be more activities [such as the regional roundtables] and a greater willingness on the part of political leaders to participate to such debates. The current situation is that intellectual women, after completion of their studies, are engaged in family duties and find little time to study further or to be active in public life;
- It was noted that women should support each other better and strengthen their capacities professionally;
- The participants highlighted the role that media plays and encouraged an awareness campaign with the message, "the emancipation of men to accept women's role in society," not "the emancipation of women.";

- Women have leadership skills but the decision to propose them as candidates depends entirely on the leadership of the political party at the central level. It would be more effective to leave the decision to a commission at the local level within the local structures.

RESULTS OF SHKODRA REGION ROUNDTABLE

- Positive examples of women's role in society were presented during the discussion, especially their role in politics, in local government, political party leadership and parliament. Women are seen to moderate the behavior of men towards them, improve the political atmosphere, and reduce the incidence of verbal abuse;
- The current difficulties that women face in politics stem from the conservative and patriarchal society;
- Women entrepreneurs suggested that political parties are not approaching potential leaders from the business community;
- The debate focused on the relationship between the efforts that political parties must make to approach prominent women and women's own outreach to political parties by showing their value and trying to get what they deserve and are not being offered;
- The Women's Political Forum also stressed that there is much more to be done by women themselves to promote their value and raise their voices in decision-making within the local political party structures, to be more active in community activities and public life.

RESULTS OF TIRANA REGION ROUNDTABLE

- The involvement of women in politics is connected to the development, distribution and quality of social services, by providing women of the community with more opportunities and facilities in terms of access to the labor market, education and health care, better living conditions, etc;
- One of the main factors regarding the increased involvement of a woman in politics is her awareness, confidence in her capacities, and responsibilities and role in the development of the society;
- The awareness campaign with women about the importance of their votes during the election processes in support of women candidates should focus on communities and especially the rural areas where there is a lack of information about their involvement in the public sphere;

- Leadership in Albania (referring to all political parties) is known for making decisions individually or based on interest groups, and ignoring the democratic processes established in their statutes;
- There should be more lobbying for gender issues, and especially the major inputs should come from those women who are currently decision-makers or leaders of high public administration institutions, in order to establish an encouraging and supportive environment for other potential women candidates.

RESULTS OF VLORA REGION ROUNDTABLE

- One of the factors responsible for the low number of women in leadership positions is money and financial resources. Often these positions are perceived to be tied to unfair or corrupt practices. Men do not want to renounce those privileges, and therefore they keep women's participation at a lower level, as women are known to be less corrupt;
- Men occupy leadership and decision-making positions in most of the public institutions. Even in decision-making positions, women are rarely supported or promoted, despite the fact that they are experts, specialists and administrators;
- Women are productive and competent. This was noted in relation to women commissioners. Women are elected commissioners because they are trusted to work with dedication, efficiency and professionalism, safeguarding the secrecy of the vote and the legal running of the voting process;
- As for women as voters the problem often lies in family members' influence over their decisions, particularly in rural areas. Thus, considering that rural areas and rural communities are a significant part of the population, the issue of family voting should be better addressed in these communities.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the adoption of Law No 9470 'On Gender Equality in Society' in July 2008, women in Albania still struggle to be elected and appointed to decision-making positions within the political arena in Albania.

The local elections (expected May 2011) provide an opportunity to change this and significantly increase the representation of women in government. In order to ensure this happens, however, the opportunity to strengthen both institutional mechanisms and the capacity of women candidates must be seized now. In addition, awareness and understanding of the value women bring to public life, their right to self-representation, and the necessity of their involvement at influential decision-making levels must be improved. The media and civil society networks are an important conduit for making this happen.

This research report indicates that there is general awareness about the existence of the gender quota law. It confirms that the legal framework is in place, as are party statutes, to ensure that women make up 30% of the candidates in the local election, i.e. listed in every third slot on the candidate lists (party ballots). It also flags that there is a significant lack of information about how the gender quota will be implemented. This needs to be remedied immediately – at both the political party and general community level - to ensure that the law is complied with in the upcoming local election in May 2011.

General recommendations

Broad recommendations arising from this report include:

1. A national civic education campaign must be conducted to raise awareness of the role and rights of women as candidates and voters;
2. Technical expertise must be provided to the political parties to ensure that the legal framework in place is followed, quota provisions and transparent and inclusive internal decision-making frameworks are implemented and adhered to;
3. The CEC must be empowered to enforce the law with strong sanctions (eg. the preferred option is for the CEC to be able to reject a candidate list that does not comply with the gender quota).

Specific recommendations

Specific recommendations that emerged from the research and the roundtables include the following:

To strengthen the legislative framework and institutional mechanisms:

- Enforcement of the Law on Gender Balance in Society to ensure the implementation

of 30% quota for women and girls in both local and national elections by including the names of female candidates in the lists of candidates;

- Amending the Electoral Code in order to ensure better implementation of the gender quota by giving an end to the ambiguity expressed in relation to national elections (candidates ranking options "and/or");
- Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of gender quota sanctioned in the LGE and EC, such as: applying equal standards for both national and local elections through strengthening the role of CEC in rejecting lists that do not fulfill the quota;
- Provide training to commissioners and the CEC to ensure that the gender quota is enforced and family voting not tolerated;
- Build the capacity of institutions at the central level and local levels to implement the implementation of the LGE and quota;
- Establish a network of political activists to lobby in support of implementation of the gender quota in the 2011 local elections. This should include women deputies, representatitves of the Women's Political Forums, women and men politicians institutions for equal opportunity etc; and
- Strengthen the institutional mechanisms for gender equality and increase its coordination role between all stakeholders in terms of respecting the LGE and gender quota and including gender issues in all government policies.

To strengthen the capacity of political parties, NGOs and representatives of special interest groups:

- Increase the level of knowledge about the Electoral Code and LGE and gender quota among the male leaders of political parties, including central leadership and local branches, as well as Women's Political Forums and media and NGO representatives;
- Strengthen the capacity of political parties through various trainings on gender issues, leadership and communication skills for men and women at both national and local level;
- Strengthen the capacity of local NGOs to play an important role in lobbying and in monitoring the implementation of gender quota by all political parties;
- Increase the civic and voter education in advance of the elections on political parties electoral programmes, voting process, women's rights and family voting. This is especially needed in schools and universities to challenge and address discriminatory stereotypes;

- The awareness campaign with women about the importance of their votes during the election processes in support of women candidates should focus on communities and especially the rural areas where there is a lack of information about their involvement in the public sphere;
- Establish new and strengthen existing networks at the regional, national and local levels between representatives of all interest groups and civil society to advocate and support the increased representation of women in politics and decision-making;
- Support parties in drafting and promoting concrete plans and strategies to increase involvement and representation of women in party structures at all levels;
- Clearly define measures that ensure equal representation and participation of women in politics and Parliament by all political parties and announcement of these measures to the public.

To build the capacity of potential women candidates:

- Identify potential women candidates (through NGOs, Women's Political Forums etc) and support them to enter the political main stream through providing leadership and technical skills training (e.g. negotiation skills, public communication skills, budgeting, etc) to potential women candidates;
- Establish mentoring programs to link experienced women officials with new and young candidates;
- Draft additional programs in the education system (summer courses, extracurricular courses, student competitions, etc) at high school and university levels on management skills (leadership) and gender equality with special focus on first time voters;
- Support policies within parties that promote equality (e.g. provision of childcare so both men and women can attend political meetings); and
- Ensure that representatives of Women's Political Forums receive training and support alongside the heads of political parties.

To improve the quality and quantity of media engagement and coverage:

- Strengthen the role of the media in promoting women in politics, in terms of awareness about the gender quota, the right of women for self-representation, the value of robust female engagement in politics and democratic process;
- Build the capacity of journalists and mass media managers with more in-depth knowledge on gender issues in order to develop competent and professional media coverage;

- Train NGOs on how to do better advocacy with the media, including helping them to identify and promote stories about the positive experiences and success stories of women leaders on global, national and local levels;
- Encourage and call to account the media in respect to their equal treatment of male and female political representatives, in relation to their portrayal of candidates and honest, ethical reporting of issues;
- Monitor media coverage in the lead-up to and during the elections for gender equality and bias issues and provide this report to parliament and the media; and
- Support the broadcasting of TV and radio pieces and newspaper articles about women's rights, involvement and equality.

In summary, there is a strong momentum at all levels of Albania society to improve the participation of women in the process of governance, nationally and locally. In order to capitalize on this momentum, and improve women's representation, strengthen the rule of law and further consolidate democratic processes and institutions, Albania must ensure that its gender quota is fully implemented in the 2011 local elections.

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Annex 2: Political Party Statutes

In this appendix are inserted parts of the Statutes of main political parties (DP, SP, LSI) as regards the participation of women in management structures of the respective political parties at national and local level for the purpose of the Report analysis.

1. STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION OF DP[45] (Democratic Party)

DP Organization – At National Level
Article 37.

- National Assembly
- The National Council
- Chairmanship
- Chair / Deputy Chairs/ Secretary General

DP Organization – At Local Level
Article 17.

- Local Branch
- Sub-Branch
- Chairmanship of the Local Branch
- Group Section
- Section

The submission of candidacies for local and central government
Article 34
1 - Candidates for local and parliamentary in Albania are to be consulted all of the DP membership.
2 - The local headship of the Sub-Branch formulates proposals on its behalf, under the procedures established by the central Headship of DP, and submits to the Local Branch Headship.
3 – Headships of the local branches decide for the candidates of local councilors (municipality, and commune, district). For municipalities of the first category, the list of councilors prepared by the Branch is approved by the central Headship of DP. With the guidance of the Headship of DP local branches may also decide on local Head candidates of DP with less than two thousand voters.
4 – The central Headship of the DP must be informed of every step of the release of the nominations. It has the right to intervene whenever it judges necessary.
Party Headship (kryesia at central level)

45) Based on the latest data available at the time of preparing this report, Available at: http://www.lsi.al/content.asp?id=-1&idd=424

Article 42
g. Twenty-five members elected by the National Council as defined in the internal regulations. **Number of winning Women should not less than 25%**. If this criterion is not met in the enumeration after the vote, then their rank is distinguished from the general.

Local Branches Chairmanships
Article 26
1 - Chairmanships of the local branches (districts, region, electoral zones, cities that have more than two sub-branches) consist of not less than 15 members. Central headship of the DP determines the number of members for each local chairmanship and the criteria to be met by candidates for member of chairmanship. **No less than ¼ of the members of chairmanships should be women**.

Chairmanship of the local Sub-Branch of the Party
Article 21
The number of elected members must be at least twice the number of members entitled to win.

c. **Number of winning women of not less than 25% of the members of the chairmanship that emerges from voting**. If this criterion is not met in the enumeration after the vote, then their rank is distinguished from the general.

2. STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION of SP (Socialist Party)[46]

SP Organization – At National Level

- National Congress
- Chairmanship
- Secretariat
- National Assembly

SP Organization – At Local Level

- The regional Assembly (municipalities and communes)
- The local organization/units
- The leadership of local organizations

46) Based on the latest data available at the time of preparing this report, Available at: http://ps.al/pushteti/statuti

3. STRUCTURAL ORGANIZATION of SMI[47](Socialist Mouvement for Integeration)

SMI Organization – At National Level
Article 9
9.4. In central level SMI has this organization:

- National Convention (K.K)
- National Steering Committee (K.D.K.)
- Presidency
- President
- Vice President
- Vice Presidents
- Secretary General

SMI Organization – At Local Level
Article 10

- Organization of SMI - The Voting Centre

10.1. The basic unit of organization of SMI's Organization at the polling station.
10.2. Organization of SMI. - The Voting Centre formed by at least 10 members of the SMI In case they do not achieve this number, with the approval of the Local Unit Steering Committee, members of the SMI - The conduct of their political lives in one of the organizations LSI - The Voting Centre neighbors.

- Steering Committee SMI. Local Unit

10.8. Local Unit Steering Committee.
10.9. Local Unit Steering Committee composed of an odd number of members, approved by a special instruction to the Presidency of the SMI.
10.10. Steering Committee members are elected by local governments through voting membership lists of candidates. Candidate lists are compiled according to this principle:
a. For municipalities a candidate for every 10 members
b. For municipalities a candidate for every 5 members
10:11. Youth Movement for Integration and the Women's Movement for Integration, separately, propose their candidates for the Electoral Area Directors Committee, who will be 20% of total candidates. This percentage is necessarily reflected in the composition of the Steering Committee of the local unit.
Representatives from each district based on criteria set by the National Convention where in any case not less than 20% of the members of the Convention shall be representative of the Youth Movement for Integration and not less than 20% of members of the Convention will be women.

47) Based on the latest data available at the time of preparing this report, Available at: http://www.lsi.al/content.asp?id=-1&idd=424

Annex 3: Additional Tables

Table 12. Would you support a women candidate in the upcoming local elections of 2011?

	Gender								
	Women			Men			Total		
	Count	Row N %	Column N %	Count	Row N %	Column N %	Count	Row N %	Column N %
No	1	50.0%	1.8%	1	50.0%	2.2%	2	100.0%	2.0%
Yes	32	55.2%	56.1%	26	44.8%	57.8%	58	100.0%	56.9%
I don't know	24	57.1%	42.1%	18	42.9%	40.0%	42	100.0%	41.2%
Total	57	55.9%	100.0%	45	44.1%	100.0%	102	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ACER Micro-Survey

Table 13. What is the media status in increasing women participation in decision-making positions, politics?

	Gender								
	Women			Men			Total		
	Count	Row N %	Column N %	Count	Row N %	Column N %	Count	Row N %	Column N %
Media encourage them	12	57.1%	21.1%	9	42.9%	20.0%	21	100.0%	20.6%
It is more supporting men as leaders	13	68.4%	22.8%	6	31.6%	13.3%	19	100.0%	18.6%
It focus on private issues or superficial characteristics of women leaders or potential candidates	17	56.7%	29.8%	13	43.3%	28.9%	30	100.0%	29.4%
4 Media does not support sufficiently the active members of the community to promote them	11	61.1%	19.3%	7	38.9%	15.6%	18	100.0%	17.6%
Other	4	28.6%	7.0%	10	71.4%	22.2%	14	100.0%	13.7%
Total	57	55.9%	100.0%	45	44.1%	100.0%	102	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ACER Micro-Survey

Table 14. Representation of Women in Municipal Councils per Region (Elected in 2007)

No.	Municipality	Members of City Councils			Head of City Council	
		Total	No. Women	% Women	F	M
1	Elbasan					
1	Elbasan	45	4	9	0	1
2	Cerrik	17	1	6	0	1
3	Belsh	17	0	0	0	1
4	Peqin	15	0	0	0	1
5	Gramsh	17	3	18	0	1
6	Librazhd	17	1	6	0	1
7	Prrenjas	15	2	13	0	1
	Total	**143**	**11**	**8**	**0**	**7**
2	Diber					
8	Peshkopi	17	3	18	0	1
9	Bulqize	17	1	6	0	1
10	Burrel	17	1	6	0	1
11	Klos-Mat	17	2	12	0	1
	Total	**68**	**7**	**10**	**0**	**4**
3	Korça					
12	Korça	35	9	26	1	0
13	Bilisht	15	3	20	0	1
14	Erseke	17	3	18	0	1
15	Leskovik	13	1	8	0	1
16	Maliq	15	3	20	0	1
17	Pogradec	25	4	16	0	1
	Total	**120**	**23**	**19**	**1**	**5**
4	Gjirokaster					
18	Gjirokaster	24	5	21	0	1
19	Libohove	12	2	17	0	1
20	Tepelene	14	1	7	0	1
21	Memaliaj	14	4	29	0	1
22	Permet	16	2	13	0	1
23	Kelcyre	14	1	7	0	1
	Total	**94**	**15**	**16**	**0**	**6**
5	Kukes					
24	Kukes	25	0	0	0	1
25	Krume	15	1	7	0	1

No.	Municipality	Members of City Councils			Head of City Council	
		Total	No. Women	% Women	F	M
26	Bajram Curri	15	2	13	0	1
	Total	**55**	**3**	**5**	**0**	**3**
6	Berat					
27	Berat	35	9	26	0	1
28	Kuçove	25	4	16	0	1
29	Ura Vajgurore	17	2	12	0	1
30	Çorovode	17	2	12	0	1
31	Poliçan	18	1	6	0	1
	Total	**112**	**18**	**16**	**0**	**5**
7	Lezhe					
32	Lézhe	25	0	0	1	0
33	Laç	26	1	4	0	1
34	Mamurras	27	2	7	0	1
35	Rreshen	17	0	0	0	1
36	Rubik	16	1	6	0	1
	Total	**111**	**4**	**4**	**1**	**4**
8	Shkoder					
37	Shkoder	45	8	18	0	1
38	Vau i Dejes	17	0	0	0	1
39	Koplik	17	0	0	0	1
40	Puke	15	4	27	0	1
41	Fushe-Arrez	13	1	8	0	1
	Total	**107**	**13**	**12**	**0**	**5**
9	Fier					
42	Fier	35	5	14	0	1
43	Patos	25	2	8	0	1
44	Roskovec	15	3	20	0	1
45	Lushnje	35	10	29	1	0
46	Divjake	17	2	12	0	1
47	Ballsh	17	3	18	1	0
	Total	**144**	**25**	**17**	**2**	**4**
10	Tirana					
48	Tirana	55	17	31	0	1
49	Vore	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
50	Kavaje	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

No.	Municipality	Members of City Councils			Head of City Council	
		Total	No. Women	% Women	F	M
51	Rrogozhine	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
52	Kamez	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 8	23	N/A	N/A	0	1
	Mini-municipality 9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Mini-municipality 11	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	**78**	**17**	**22**	**0**	**2**
11	Vlora					
53	Vlore	45	9	20	1	0
54	Sarande	25	3	12	1	0
55	Himare	16	1	6	0	1
56	Selenice	15	4	27	1	0
57	Orikum	16	1	6	1	0
58	Delvine	17	1	6	1	0
59	Konispol	12	2	17	0	1
	Total	**146**	**21**	**14**	**5**	**2**
12	Durres					
60	Durres	45	5	11	0	1
61	Maminas	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
62	Manez	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
63	Shijak	17	3	18	0	1
64	Sukth	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
65	Fushekruje	25	2	8	0	1
66	Kruje	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Total	**87**	**10**	**11**	**0**	**3**
Grand Total		**1265**	**167**	**13**	**9**	**50**

Source: MoLSAEO, Directorate of Policies for Equal Opportunities

Nr.	Bashkitë	Anëtare të Këshillit Bashkiak			Kryetarë të Këshillit Bashkiak	
		Gjithsej	Nr. Grave	Gratë %	F	M
65	Fushëkrujë	25	2	8	0	1
66	Krujë	x	x	x	x	x
	Gjithsej	**87**	**10**	**11**	**0**	**3**
GJITHSEJ		**1265**	**167**	**13**	**9**	**50**

Burimi: MPÇSSHB, Departamenti i Politikave të Shanseve të Barabarta

Shënim: X Të dhëna të padisponueshme