

EXPANSION OF FIRST-PAST-THE-POST VOTING IN THE POLISH ELECTORAL SYSTEM

For more than a decade in Polish political debates, demands were made to replace the electoral system of proportional representation with first-past-the-post voting (FPTP) based on single-mandate constituencies. Over the years, the concept of such electoral system has gained significant support in Polish society, and it became one of the key points on the agendas of some political parties, including PO, which in 2011, won parliamentary elections for the second time in a row.

The proposed changes are intended to affect mainly the voting system to the Sejm (currently, MPs are elected to the Sejm under proportional representation), but they may be hard to implement as it will require changing the Constitution of Poland. According to supporters, the FPTP system could be applied to other elections as well – for example, to the Senate and local governments.

Almost immediately after the 2007 elections, PO commenced a debate regarding the need to change the Constitution in order to allow for implementation of the FPTP system. With no doubt, this initiative was in accordance with what the majority of Poles expected. They perceived the new system as a single remedy to all imperfections of the political system (see Chart 10 and 11).¹⁹

However, due to the scepticism of other parliamentary groups, including PSL (the coalition partner of the PO (Civic Platform) at that time) towards the proposed changes, in November 2007 PO came up with a proposal that “half of MPs or even two thirds of them would be elected under a FPTP system, mainly in large cities. The remaining MPs would be elected under the proportional representation system”²⁰. Despite a softening of their proposal, PO still could not count on sufficient support to change basic electoral acts, let alone the Constitution. The difficulties in implementation of the FPTP system have triggered a vivid reaction from impatient civil society organizations that supported the idea (they claimed that this issue should be the subject of a national referendum)²¹ and some right-wing commentators, who envisaged that the entire political scene in Poland could be divided between two parties.²² Despite the fact that the demand to implement FPTP has been raised many times in the public debate, after numerous talks with the Polish People’s Party, the politicians of PO decided to withdraw their proposal. They declared that they had reached a “compromise”, i.e., an agreement between PO and PSL aimed at the implementation of the FPTP system in local government elections (it has not been agreed, though, whether all levels of local government will be included). So far the FPTP system has been introduced in elections to the councils of

¹⁹ Polacy o proponowanych zmianach w systemie politycznym, *Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, Warsaw, April 2008.

²⁰ D. Kołakowska, E. Olczyk, *Okręgi jednomandatowe poróżnią koalicjantów?*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 3 November, 2007.

²¹ E. Olczyk, *Bój o jednomandatowe okręgi wyborcze*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 15 November, 2007.

²² M. Migalski, *Jak pozbyć się SLD*, “Rzeczpospolita”, 19 February, 2008.

gminas in 2010. The project to apply the FPTP system to elections to the Sejm has been suspended for the time being.

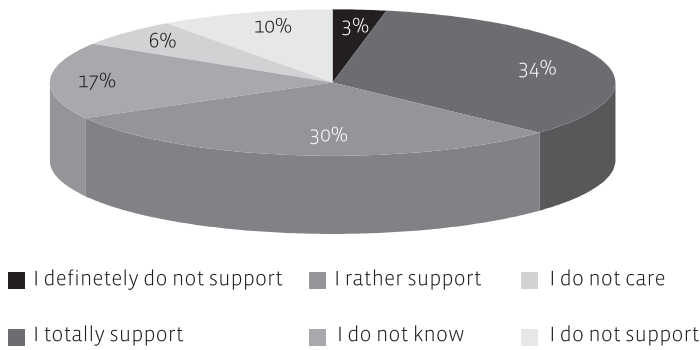


Chart 10. Do you support the introduction of first-past-the-post voting system, which means, that in one electoral district one deputy is elected?

Source
CBOS 2008

The proposal to implement the FPTP system has been heavily criticised by some of the expert communities. The negative consequences resulting from the potential implementation of the new system have been pointed out repeatedly. One of the arguments used against the change was that FPTP voting limits women’s access to politics. According to research quoted in Poland, female candidates have little chance to be elected to bodies of public authorities dominated by men. According to 1995 research on gender representation in parliaments of countries with stable democratic systems, parliaments elected under FPTP systems had 11% of female MPs whereas in parliaments elected under proportional representation, women’s representation was approximately 20%. These rates in 2004 amounted to 14,4% and 27,6% respectively.²³ There were claims that in countries using the FPTP system, the issue of pushing women out of politics became so serious that a variety of special mechanisms had to be applied in order to limit the negative impact of the voting system. One specific example is twinning, where for each constituency choosing from among male candidates, another constituency chooses from among female candidates (this mechanism is used in Wales and Scotland).²⁴

There was, however, no significant response to these expert opinions. In the next stages of the legislative process on amending the electoral law that continued between 2009 and 2010, PO focused on implementation of FPTP in elections to the Senate and local governments, as this did not require amending the Constitution. Those changes were easier to implement, as the Senate elections were held already under the majority electoral system (but according to multi-member as opposed to single-member constituencies).

²³ R. Markowski, *System wyborczy – system partyjny – jakość demokracji. O jednomandatowych okręgach wyborczych*, Warsaw 2010, page 6.

²⁴ B. Michalak, A. Sokala, *Leksykon prawa wyborczego i systemów wyborczych*, Warsaw 2010, page 102.

Eventually, after months of work, on 5 January 2011, the Sejm passed the new Electoral Code that was signed by the President on 19 January 2011. The Code introduced the new method of electing senators using the FPTP system with single-member constituencies. This meant that beginning from the 2011 elections, each constituency will have only one mandate and each elector will vote for only one candidate. As mentioned above, under previous regulations, two to four senators were elected in one district and each voter could choose the respective number of candidates. For many years, the Senate had less female members than the Sejm, which was elected under the proportional representation system (at the end of the 2007-2011 term, among 100 senators, there were only seven women).

According to the Electoral Code, the FPTP method was introduced also at the level of gmina councils. Thus, the first step towards the expansion of the FPTP method in the Polish electoral system has been achieved.

Public opinion on the introduced changes

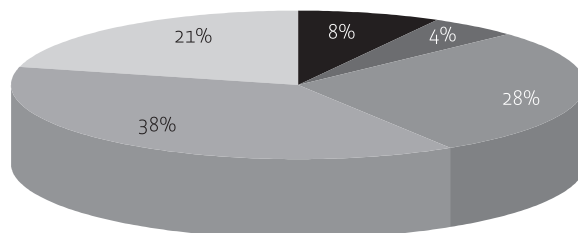
According to polls conducted by the Institute of Public Affairs and CBOS before the 2011 parliamentary elections, the majority of respondents (66%) favourably perceived the application of the FPTP system to Senate elections. Among them, 38% appreciated the simplicity of the system and 28% pointed out that it is crucial that the “best” candidate wins.

Those respondents opposing the new regulations are in the minority (13%), whereas 5% stressed that under FPTP, a person with a minor advantage over another candidates can win the mandate. Eight per cent of the interviewees preferred the possibility of distributing their support among a number of candidates, the option available in multi-member districts. More than one fifth (21%) of the interviewees displayed a neutral attitude towards the new regulations.

Chart 11.

In the 2011 election, for the first time we will be voting for Senators using the first-past-the-post mechanism. It means that we will be voting for just one instead of two or more candidates. Do you support this solution?

Source
CBOS 2008



- No, because I prefer to split my support over several candidates
- No, because the elected candidate could have had only minimal advantage over others
- Yes, because under this method, the best candidate wins
- Yes, because voting for just one candidate is simpler
- I do not know

Men are strong supporters of the FPTP mechanism (73%). Women tend to be more restrained – as many as 60% of women are in favour, but one quarter is neutral towards this method.

Perspectives

Notably, the regulations introduced in 2011 are perceived as the first stage of FPTP implementation in the Polish electoral system. While the introduction of the mechanism in elections to the Sejm will be hard to carry out (because it requires an amendment of the Constitution), the proposal remains on the agenda of the ruling political party. It seems that introduction of FPTP at all levels of local governments is feasible. One of the supporters of this initiative is the current President of Poland, who has promised: “After the parliamentary elections, I intend to put forward a proposal to amend the electoral system at all levels of local governments, so that the deputies would be elected under the FPTP system.”²⁵

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

In the year 2011, deep changes to the Polish electoral law took place. Undoubtedly, they had an impact on the parliamentary elections that were carried out in the autumn of the same year. These systemic electoral reforms affected and have the potential to affect levels of women’s representation in different ways. On the one hand, electoral reforms introduced the quota mechanism, which guaranteed a minimum of 35% representation of both men and women on the electoral lists. This was a big step forward in the process of equalisation of women’s and men’s participation in public bodies. However, at the same time, these changes constituted a step back because the first-past-the-post voting system was applied to the elections to gmina councils. The above-described negative consequences of this step will not help increase the participation of minority groups in politics. These two tendencies clashed in Poland during the parliamentary elections.

Female candidates in the 2011 parliamentary elections

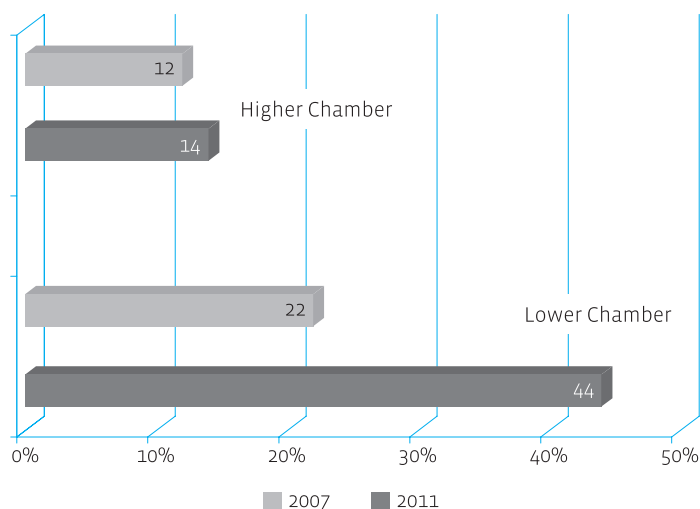
During the parliamentary elections that took place in 2011, for the first time in Polish history the registration of political party lists by the electoral committee depended on meeting the required proportion of male and female candidates on the electoral lists. As a result, the percentage of women candidates doubled as compared to the previous elections. 3,063 women stood for the lower house of parliament, and 69 for the upper house. They constituted, respective-

²⁵ Jednomandatowe okręgi w Sejmie po wyborach, Portal Samorządowy, <http://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/prawo-i-finance/20613.html> (as at 2 December 2011)

ly, 44% and 14% of candidates. Such a disparity between the two houses of the parliament can be explained by the fact that elections to the Senate were held under the majority electoral system and – as a consequence – neither electoral lists with multiple candidates nor the quota mechanism applied to them.

Chart 12.
Female candidates
in parliamentary
elections in 2007
and 2011

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs



Political parties not only met their obligations, but also exceeded the required quota. PiS, whose electoral lists contained the least number of women, exceeded the required limit of female candidates by 5%, and reserved for them 40% of positions on their lists. The highest proportion of female candidates (48%) was found on the electoral lists of Polska Partia Pracy. This party, however, does not enjoy significant levels of popular support – in the previous elections it obtained only 0,5% of all votes. Among Polish leading political parties, SLD nominated the most women candidates– they occupied 44% of the party’s lists. Forty-two per cent of PO candidates were female and, in the case of the PSL, the rate reached 41%.

Among the candidates of the four biggest political parties (PO, PiS, SLD and PSL), on 19 electoral lists registered in all 41 electoral districts, women occupied at least half of the positions. In this respect, SLD compared favourably with other parties: in 10 electoral districts, more than 50% of their registered candidates were women. By comparison, PiS managed to achieve parity on its electoral lists only in the Radom district.

Presence on the list is just the beginning of the long road to electoral success. Besides support received from one’s political party, success in campaigning and winning voters’ approval, an important issue is a candidate’s *position* on the list. The most desired positions are “number ones”, that is, candidates opening the lists. Voters tend to cast their votes for “number ones” most often. In general, in 2011 only 21% of the abovementioned positions on all registered

electoral lists were given to women. From this point of view, SLD no longer enjoys the position of most “women-friendly” among leading political parties. PO registered the highest number of female candidates opening electoral lists (14 out of 41 districts). PiS guaranteed 10 female “number ones”, while PSL and SLD gave women six opening positions each. RP (Palikot Movement) registered the lowest number of women running for office from the first position on the list – only four female candidates enjoyed such a position. These differences reflect to a great degree the real support that each party enjoyed in pre-elections polls. The support for RP for a long time oscillated around the elections threshold (5% in Poland), PSL reached 6% and SLD fluctuated around 10%.

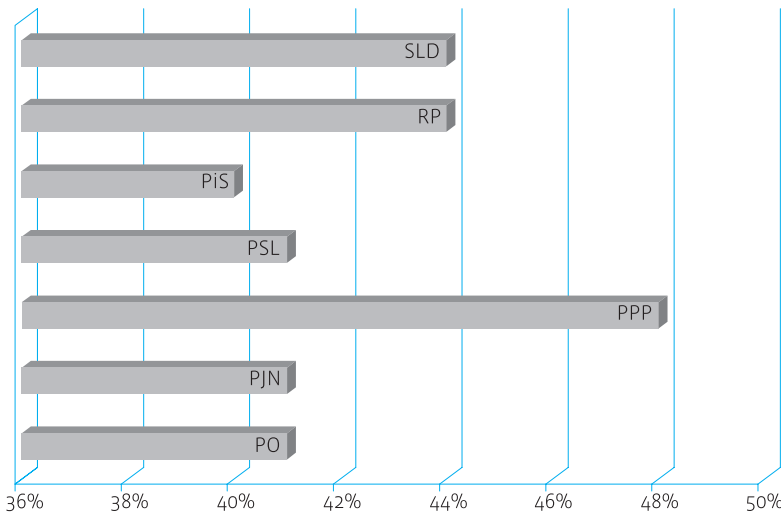


Chart 13. Share of women on the electoral lists of political parties in the 2011 parliamentary elections

Source: National Electoral Commission

The leaders of political parties were aware of the fact that if some of their candidates managed to enter the Sejm, they would be the ones from the top of electoral lists. This may be why men were positioned as “number ones” more often than women. PiS and PO, each receiving 30% support according to pre-elections polls, could “risk” having a woman as a leader of the list with greater frequency, being almost sure that from the same list at least a few more candidates would enter the lower house of the parliament. No wonder that in this context, the leader of the opinion polls – PO – was the only one among political parties present in the sixth term of the Sejm that placed a female candidate in at least one of the three top positions on the list in all electoral districts. Already during elections of 2007, PO introduced the so-called “soft quotas”²⁶ as part of their party regulations, according to which the top three

²⁶ Soft quotas include non-mandatory quotas, voluntary party targets or minimum recommendations adopted by particular political parties in their internal regulations. See also: D. Dahlerup (ed.), *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Routledge 2006.

positions on the electoral list had to comprise at least one female candidate and the top five positions – at least two of them. In the 2011 parliamentary elections, SLD guaranteed their female candidates running for an office one of the top three positions on the lists in 40 out of 41 electoral districts. It was a different situation as regards the PSL and the PiS. PSL excluded women from the top three positions on the electoral lists in 38% of districts in which they had registered their candidates. PiS placed a lower number of women at the top of the electoral list: no women from PiS featured in the top three positions of the lists in more than 50% of electoral districts. The equal proportion of men and women on the electoral lists of all political parties was achieved only at the 14th position.

Just as important as position on the electoral list is the district from which candidates run for office. Support for political parties differs, depending on the region of Poland. Despite its strong position nationwide, PO cannot count on victory in the Podkarpackie or Świętokrzyskie voivodships – traditional PiS bastions. It is possible to identify which regions identify strongly with specific political parties by looking at the results of previous elections. If we take into consideration the regional factor, the number of seats in parliament won in former elections and the position on the electoral list, we are able to determine for each party in a concrete district the so-called “winnable positions”, that is, positions on the list that statistically increase the chance of being elected. PO guaranteed the highest number of these “best” positions to women – 38%; in the end, one in four “winnable positions” was taken by PiS female candidates. SLD reserved 23% of the position for women and the lowest number of “winnable positions” on the list was given by PSL.

The majority of women that entered the lower house of parliament were placed at the top of electoral lists. Thirty-one female deputies were elected from among the “number ones”. Twenty-five women won their seat in the Sejm by having run for office from the second place on the electoral list. Twenty of the new female deputies were placed in third position on the list. The remaining 33 female politicians elected to the parliament were not placed among the top positions on the electoral lists. Some of them even succeeded from the 10th or 14th position. However, there were some cases of women opening electoral lists and not entering parliament. As many as nine female “number ones”- five from PSL and four from SLD – lost the elections. Among them was the former Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Jolanta Fedak, and the former Marshal of the Sejm, Ewa Kierzkowska. In four cases, the losing “number ones” were overtaken by men running for office from the same electoral list. There were also cases of political parties saving for female candidates the opening positions on the list in districts in which eventually they did not obtain a single seat in the Sejm – that was the case of Katarzyna Piekarska, a well-known activist of SLD.

Still, we should take note of the fact that in 24 cases, women running for office from lower positions won seats in the lower house, thus overtaking male candidates positioned higher on the same lists. This was the case in Lubelskie district, where two women placed in positions 5 and 6 received more votes than a man positioned third on the list. A similar situation took place in Wałbrzych, where Agnieszka Kołacz-Leszczyńska, from PO, entered the Sejm from the 7th position, leaving behind two male candidates placed in 5th and 6th position respectively.

We may observe a relation between the presence of women in so-called “winnable positions” (determined on the basis of the number of seats obtained in a certain district during previous elections by each political party) and their participation in the parliamentary club of a given party. The more “winnable positions” given to women, the more female deputies entered parliamentary clubs, which is illustrated in Chart 14.

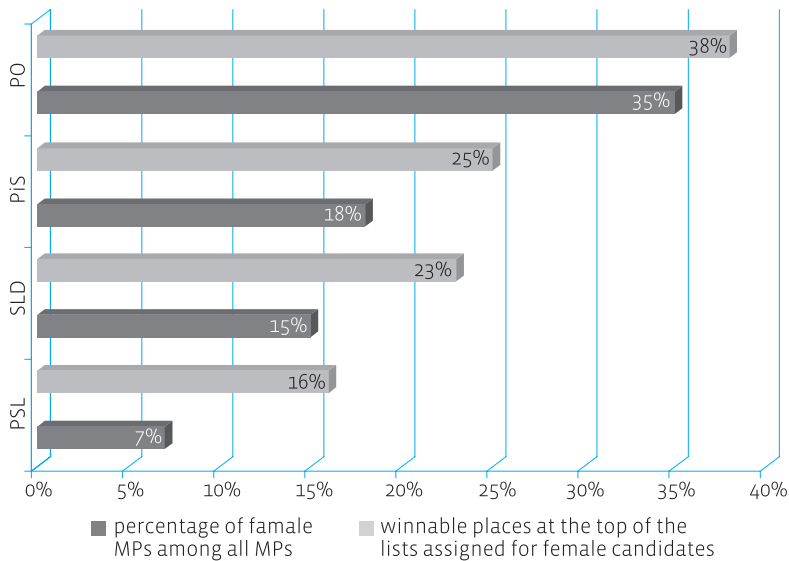


Chart 14. Impact of winnable places on the share of female MPs in the Sejm’s parliamentary clubs

Source
The Institute of Public Affairs and Dominik Batorski (ICM UW), Michał Bojanowski (ICM UW); Data includes only the parties that took part in the 2007 elections. The result of the LiD (Left and Democrats Coalition) was used as to forecast winnable positions within SLD in 2011.

Being in the top positions on the electoral lists was not the only factor that had an influence on electoral success. As noted above, the number of women on the lists differed from one region to another. Taking into consideration the lists of all political party electoral committees²⁷, the highest number of women candidates ran in Wałbrzych, Rybnik and Płock (women constituted more than 47% of the total number of candidates). The lowest number of women – less than 40% – standing as candidates was found in Rzeszów. However,

²⁷ According to the Polish electoral law, candidates are put up by electoral committees. There are three types of committees: political parties’ electoral committee, coalition electoral committee (e.g. of several political parties), voters’ electoral committee (of citizens who are not members of political parties). The voters’ electoral committees play an important role in local government elections.

when analyzing the results of parliamentary elections, it is difficult to identify a direct relation between the total number of women candidates on the electoral list, and women elected in a given district. Only in the case of Wałbrzych, where women constituted 47,7% of all candidates, did the proportion of female deputies exceed 60%. To give an example, the percentage of mandates won by women in Rzeszów and Rybnik is similar (around 20%), despite large disparities between numbers of female candidates on the lists of all electoral committees registered in the abovementioned districts.

Presence in the electoral campaign and the image of a candidate created within it are also important factors of electoral success. Taking into consideration political party electoral committees campaigns, broadcast on public television during free air-time from 24 September 2011 until 7 October 2011, it can be seen that women were definitely less present in the campaign than men.²⁸ Only 27% of candidates shown in media campaigns were female. Thirty-seven women and 103 men were presented in national broadcasts. In the broadcasts shown in the voivodship of Mazowsze, 44 women and 116 men made an appearance. Above all, women were associated with their family roles. They mainly spoke about family policy. This was not conducive to the creation of an image of women as competent individuals aware of how public institutions work and capable of assuming decision-making responsibility at the national level. None of the women appearing in 335 spots broadcast nationwide and in Mazowieckie voivodship spoke on foreign policy or national matters.

In conclusion, the most important drivers of women's successful election to the Sejm included position on the electoral list, the choice of electoral district, as well as the results of particular parties in the previous elections. For these reasons, the lack of the zipper system resulted in a limited effectiveness of the quota mechanism. Yet the doubling of the proportion of females on the electoral lists has translated into a breaking of the 20% barrier of women women MPs only for the second time in the history of the Polish Parliament (between 1980 and 1985 there were 23% female deputies in the single-chamber parliament).

Between 2007 and 2011, the 94 female MPs seated in the Sejm comprised 20% of the total number of deputies. Following the 2011 elections, however, the number of women among the MPs amounted to 110, i.e. 24% of all members of the lower house of parliament. The highest share of women can be found in the parliamentary faction of PO (35%). PiS has 18% women in its club, SLD – 15%, Ruch Palikota and Solidarna Polska both 12.5%. The parliamentary faction of the PSL is the only one with less than 10% female members.

²⁸ For a wider analysis of women's image in media campaigns before the 2011 parliamentary elections, see: E. Rekosz, *Women and men in television electoral campaign. Parliamentary elections of 2011*, Warsaw, Institute of Public Affairs, 2011 (typescript)

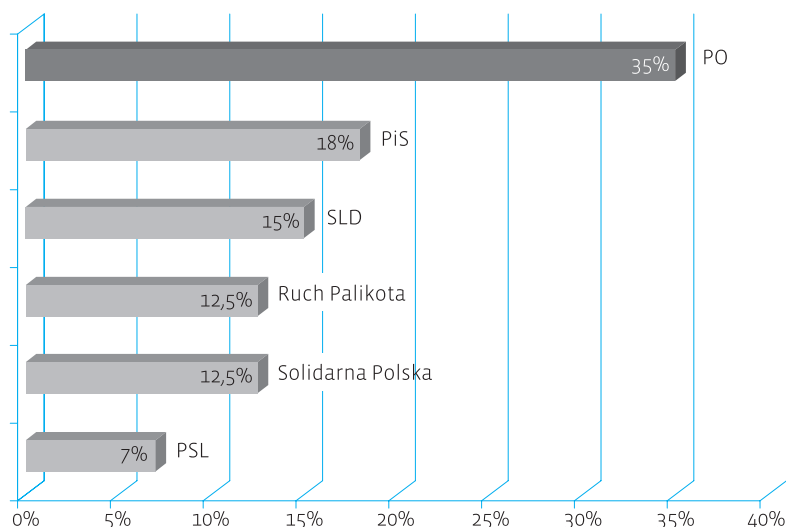


Chart 15.
Share of women
in the Parliamentary
Factions after the
2011 elections

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs

The share of female members of a particular faction should be reflected in their representation on the faction's board. However, each of the parliamentary factions is headed by a man. There are nine female vice-chairs in the seventh term of the Sejm, which is illustrated in Table 2 below.

Parliamentary Faction	Share of women on board of parliamentary faction	Females-to-males ratio among the vice-chairs
PO (Civic Platform)	40%	6 females/5 males
PiS (Law and Justice)	38%	2 females/4 males
PSL (Polish People's Party)	14%	0 females/3 males
SLD (Democratic Left Alliance)	20%	1 female/2 males
RP (Palikot Movement)	18%	2 females/4 males

Table 2.

Source
The Institute of Public
Affairs

Noticeably, in the seventh term of the Sejm, a woman became Marshal of the Sejm for the first time in Polish parliamentary history. There is one more woman on the board of the Sejm – Deputy Wanda Nowicka from Ruch Palikota. Counter to earlier announcements, SLD designated a man to join the board – Deputy Jerzy Wenderlich. Massive gender disproportions are clearly visible in the Sejm elected in 2011 among chairpersons of the permanent standing committees. Out of 26 committees, only three are headed by women – the committees on Culture and Media, Deputies' Ethics, and European Union Affairs.

The adoption of the new Electoral Code that implemented gender quotas, however, had no direct impact on women's participation in elections to the Senate. Under the new electoral law, deputies to the Senate are elected on

a first-past-the-post basis.²⁹ In terms of gender distribution among the candidates to the Senate elections in 2007 and in 2011, a small increase in the share of female contenders took place. Among the candidates to the Senate in 2007 there were 47 women and 338 men, whereas in the 2011 elections, there were 69 and 430 respectively. The share of women running for the mandate increased slightly from 12,2% to 13,8%. The comparison between the 2007 and 2011 elections looks entirely different when it comes to the number of women actually elected to the upper house of parliament. Only eight women were elected to the seventh-term Senate, whereas in 2011, 13 women were elected senators. All elected women ran for the office as candidates of a political party. At the same time, many strong candidates running from independent platforms failed in their bid for election, despite great support from voters. Among them was Izabella Sierakowska, who received one third of the votes in Lublin, and Barbara Dolniak, who won one fifth of the votes in Sosnowiec. There is one woman on the Senate's board, which consists of four seats. Out of 18 standing committees in the Senate, only one is headed by a woman (the Environment Committee), while another one has a female vice-chairperson (Foreign Affairs Committee). Women's real participation in the executive bodies of the upper house of parliament is therefore minimal.

The noticeable but minor increase in female representation in the Senate does not mean that Poland has achieved a satisfactory level of women's representation in the upper chamber of parliament. Compared to the other 76 countries with two-chamber parliaments, Poland ranks 20th in terms of the proportion of female senators.³⁰

Women in the bodies of the executive branch

After the parliamentary elections in 2011, for the first time won by the ruling political party, executive power remains in the hands of representatives of the coalition between the PO (Civic Platform) and the PSL (Polish People's Party). The Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, has replaced some members of the Cabinet, but that has not translated in a higher share of female ministers. In the previous Cabinet, consisting of 19 members, there were five women.³¹ Currently, the Cabinet, expanded to 20 seats³², features four female ministers – Minister of Science and Higher Education – Barbara Kudrycka, Minister of National Education – Katarzyna Szumilas, Minister of Regional Development – Elżbieta Bieńkowska, and Minister of Sport and Tourism – Joanna Mucha.

²⁹ A detailed analysis of this institution along with its implications for women's participation in politics can be found in the chapter "Expansion of the FPTP voting in the Polish electoral system" above.

³⁰ Source: IPU Parline Database <http://www.ipu.org/parlinee/WomenInParliament.asp?REGION=All&typesearch=1&LANG=ENG> (as at 16 November 2011)

³¹ As at the date of the Government's appointment – 16 November 2007.

³² As at the date of the Government's appointment – 18 November 2011.

Summary

The amendments to the electoral law introduced in 2011, aimed at increasing women's representation in politics, have resulted in doubling the share of women candidates on electoral lists, compared to the 2007 elections. The increase in women's representation in the parliament, however, was not as substantial as expected. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the highest share of women MPs (24%) in Polish parliamentary history has been achieved. Yet, from the European perspective or even that of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe,³³ Polish women still have very limited representation in the country's legislative bodies.

Naturally, in the post-elections debate there were critical opinions voiced with respect to the functioning of the system of gender quotas,³⁴ yet one should not underestimate the fact that for the first time a woman was appointed Marshal of the Sejm – the nation's second most important office. Although the appointment of Ewa Kopacz does not directly result from the law – as the Electoral Code only regulates female representation among candidates – it is fair to assume that the debate over gender quotas and women's role in politics influenced the decision. Yet the debate has not been followed by all of Polish society. According to polls conducted by CBOS and the IPA³⁵ one month before the elections, almost half of the Polish population (41%) had no idea how the new quota mechanism worked. More than a quarter of respondents understood the quota system as an allocation of a certain number of seats in the Sejm to women, and only 22% was aware that gender quotas ensure a minimum of 35% female candidates on electoral lists.

In the 2011 elections, for the first time the Senate was elected under the FPTP system. Despite the assumption, that majority electoral system will support independent candidates, the majority of Poles voted for representatives of political parties. Among the 100 MPs in the Senate, only 13 women were elected. This was an increase in comparison to the previous term of the Senate (seven female senators), yet the representation of women in the upper house of parliament remains below 15% and their presence on boards of standing committees is insignificant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the abovementioned factors influencing the level of women's representation in local and national politics, the following steps

33 M. Krook, P. Norris, *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, OSCE, (<http://www.osce.org/odi-hr/81137>)

34 Statement by Jarosław Kaczyński, Chairman of PiS of 11 October 2011 after: R.Grochal, „Kobiet więcej, ale ciągle mało”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12 October, 2011.

35 *Wiedza i opinie Polaków o prawie wyborczym i mechanizmach kampanii*, *Komunikat z badań*, CBOS, IPA, Warsaw, September 2011.

can be recommended in order to increase the level of female participation in the political decision-making process. The recommendations are divided into those requiring legislative changes and those related to the public debate on women's participation in politics in Poland.

Proposed legislative changes:

1. A debate should be initiated over the return to proportional representation voting at all levels. According to all analyses, this system is significantly better at fostering equalization of gender opportunities. Simultaneously, a debate should be opened over the possible ways of equalizing gender opportunities in majority electoral systems (*twinning, all women's short-list*).
2. Electoral regulations on gender quotas in proportional elections should include provisions introducing the zipper system, where female and male candidates are placed in alternate slots among the top ten positions on a party's candidate list.
3. The regulations of the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) on the detailed procedure for conducting an electoral campaign in radio and television broadcasts by the authorized electoral committees of political parties should include obligations to provide a more balanced amount of air-time to candidates of both genders.

Proposed changes to the internal functioning of political parties and parliamentary clubs:

1. Parliamentary clubs should promote female speakers in parliamentary debates.
2. Political parties should promote gender balance on their boards.

Proposed changes regarding the public debate:

1. A multidimensional debate should be held on political priorities of men and women. It should take place, *inter alia*, in the Parliamentary Women's Caucus..
2. By way of nominating coordinators for gender equality in governmental agencies, the equality policy should be enhanced and gender prejudice should be eliminated.
3. Recognition of women's priorities requires co-operation of female MPs and NGOs that host gender debates. According to research, remaining within the area of traditional convictions on what is "political" and what is "non-political" causes female MPs to pursue goals and paths that have been previously set by men. This conformism is not in line with the expectation of the female electorate. Introduction of deliberative democracy in

the form of wide debates on political priorities that engage various social groups could help bring together the electorate's expectations on the one hand, and actions of both male and female politicians on the other.

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