

Gender pulse of the media in the election campaign

Media Monitoring of the 2023
Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro
with a Focus on Gender Perspective



Podgorica, 2023.

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Introduction

In election cycles, people mostly remember only the results, while the content of the campaign in terms of key messages and electoral programmes is rarely retained. Issues of gender equality also remain on the margins, which, unfortunately, is indicated by the recent extraordinary parliamentary elections in Montenegro held on 11 June 2023.

The issue of gender equality, as well as the relationship between political parties and the media, significantly shapes social reality. Objective and non-discriminatory public informing about electoral processes is extremely important for strengthening the overall political culture. Through the project “*SPINoFACT 7 – Media Monitoring of 2023 Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro with focus on Gender Perspective*” implemented by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE), with the support of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Montenegro, the aim was to bring gender-responsible media reporting into the public spotlight as part of encouraging the political participation of women, especially in light of the growing misogyny in Montenegro, which already has a chilling effect on women’s engagement in matters of public importance. Additionally, the aim was to stimulate discussions among various social actors, particularly media, civil society organizations, and representatives of political parties, regarding the most important aspects of media reporting during the 2023 Parliamentary election campaign in Montenegro.

The findings of the media monitoring point to the underrepresentation of gender equality issues in public political communication. Thus, during the campaign, only 178 or 2% of the announcements were related to gender equality, while only 3% of media announcements portrayed women positively. This campaign was also marked by notably calmer atmosphere compared to previous electoral cycles, but this did not contribute to the media demonstrating more neutrality and balance in their reporting, although some progress has been visible.

During the project, we also conducted an analysis of the electoral programmes of the lists and concluded that the gender equality issue was significantly underrepresented in these programmes. Additionally, the percentage of women on the lists mostly hovered around the legal minimum. Through direct interviews with the leaders of the candidate lists, we obtained their views on issues of gender equality, and these interviews are given as comprehensive part of this publication.

Media monitoring, conducted with the expert support of the Arhimed agency, covered 25 media outlets, the highest number to date for similar monitoring conducted by CCE. A total of 9,861 media announcements were recorded and analysed across 10 television stations, 3 daily newspapers, and 12 online portals. Obtained data provide insights into how candidate lists communicated gender equality issues, how the media treated women’s political participation, but also in general how the media reported on candidate lists. It is noticeable that the largest political parties and coalitions

generated the most media announcements, both positive and negative. The analysis of media contents also revealed polarization within the Montenegrin media, with noticeable biased reporting instead of balanced reporting. Along with the analysis of advertising of political parties on television, radio stations, print media, and social media, as well as renting billboard positions, we calculated whose parliamentary mandate “cost” the least and whose cost the most in this regard.

A team composed of 6 independent monitors from NGOs and the media community was engaged by CCE to monitor the election campaign on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram – where over 6,600 posts were analysed, and approximately 120 official pages of political parties, candidate lists, coalitions, leaders, and candidates were monitored. Unfortunately, there were very few posts promoting gender equality in this context.

Billboards were perceived as important tools of political communication and they were analysed in all Montenegrin municipalities regarding the presence of women, as well as the ratio of male and female figures on billboards and in TV video clips.

Furthermore, the project’s particular importance lies in 11 infographics and a video animation that summarized the key findings of all the research. We believe that these informative and easily accessible materials will be a valuable resource for comparative analyses in future electoral cycles.

Gender equality is a fundamental principle of modern society, and the electoral process and media play a crucial role in promoting it. The goal of the project was to shed light on the importance and position of this issue in Montenegro, as a part of contributing to building more inclusive and just society. In this context, gender stereotypes must be suppressed on a daily basis, especially through political parties and electoral processes, as this is the space that significantly enables or hinders equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions. Quotas are not sufficient, as demonstrated by the new composition of the Parliament, which had only 21% women at its constituent session.

The publication “*Gender Pulse of the Media in Election Campaigns*” is one piece of the complex mosaic of this issue that should be more in focus for all of us. We owe special thanks to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Montenegro for recognizing and supporting this project.

Gender equality issues in electoral programme

In the electoral programmes for the 2023 parliamentary elections in Montenegro, only 6 political entities, or 40% of the total number of participants, directly or indirectly addressed the issues of gender equality, women's rights, and their position in the public, social, and political spheres of Montenegro. The remaining 60% of actors did not have a single item related to women's rights and gender equality in their programmes and it is particularly worrying that political entities who achieved the best results in the parliamentary elections are within this 60%. Unfortunately, these issues were mainly addressed by political parties that won very small number of seats or did not pass the electoral threshold, except for the *Together!* coalition and the *Bosniak Party*. Interestingly, political parties representing less numerous ethnic groups in Montenegro (such as the *Bosniak Party*, *Albanian Alliance* and *Albanian Forum*) as well as coalition *Yes. We Can for Civic Montenegro* and the *Movement for Changes (PzP)* devoted entire chapters to this theme.

Among the political entities that gave a slightly larger part of the programme to this important issue, the ***Bosniak Party (BP)***¹ stands out, for which this segment constitutes 4.65% of their electoral programme. As expected, given that this party represents a smaller population in Montenegro, they focused on women of Bosniak nationality. Thus, they raised the issue that women from less numerous groups face additional marginalization compared to other women in the political scene and that so far, they have not held important leadership positions in the state. Furthermore, the BP advocates for greater representation of Bosniak women in high-ranking positions, greater visibility in the public, more active role in the social and political sphere of Montenegro, with the accompanying removal of stereotypes attributed to them. In addition, BP outlines several specific mechanisms they plan to implement to bring about change in this area: promotion of education and training of women through the Women's Forum, organization of trainings to strengthen women's entrepreneurship, increase in maternity benefits, fight against discrimination against women, etc.

Movement for Changes (PzP)² has dedicated 4.5% of its electoral programme to addressing issue of the position of women, including a special section. Stating that gender equality is a necessity of

¹ Electoral program "IT'S CLEAR! - Bosniak Party - MSc Ervin Ibrahimović"

² Electoral programme of the Movement for Changes – Montenegro First: Reforms to save the country

Montenegrin society, PzP problematizes the dominance of men in decision-making positions, the lack of gender parity in employment, violence against women, stereotypes leading to both psychological and physical violence against women, gender discrimination with a focus on women from vulnerable categories, exposure to verbal violence, etc. PzP also gives recommendations that should contribute to the affirmation of women, such as: economic empowerment of women and strengthening of female entrepreneurship with concisely prescribed measures; positive discrimination and stimulating measures for women with disabilities, single mothers, and women victims of domestic violence; social pensions and financial support for certain categories of women; support measure during pregnancy and maternity leave; establishment of a fund for compensating victims of violence; positioning the Women's Club as a permanent working body in the Parliament; sanctioning verbal violence directed at women from public life; advocating for greater participation of women in decision-making positions, etc.

Coalition "**YES. We Can for Civic Montenegro**"³ emphasizes the improvement of the position of women in society as one of its priorities in its electoral programme⁴, dedicating **4%** to this issue and proposing a series of measures. These measures, *inter alia*, include gender parity and better representation of women in decision-making positions; encouraging women to participate more actively in politics; enacting electoral legislation that fundamentally resolves the issue of (un)equal representation of women and men; combating discrimination against women, concrete actions for the prevention and abolition of all forms of gender-based discrimination, violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in women; strengthening and creating new institutional mechanisms for gender equality; measures related to family, child-rearing, women's work in the house, etc. They also emphasize the importance of using gender-sensitive language as well as the general raising of awareness about the importance of these issues.

In the electoral programme of the **Albanian Alliance**⁵, the segment titled "Women" constitutes **6.44%** and thoroughly problematizes certain issues while offering measures for their addressing. The focus is on the economic empowerment of Albanian women in Montenegro and the policies intended to achieve this, including tax incentives for women, priority in the allocation of funds and subsidies, etc. This list is the only one that opened up the issue of inheritance of family property, with a promise to take concrete legislative initiatives to ensure equal treatment for women in this area. They also highlight the girls' rights to education, assistance with education costs for women in Albanian society in Montenegro, as well as scholarship programmes for women in the country and abroad. The specificity of this electoral programme lies in advocating for the improvement of the level of social protection and healthcare services for certain women's needs. The programme clearly addresses violence against women and domestic violence, calling for strict legal measures, change in social awareness, and the eradication of stereotypes and prejudices, which further encourage violent and discriminatory actions. Finally, great importance is given to increasing women's participation in decision-making positions, candidate lists and various functions.

3 The coalition is composed of two entities: the Civic Movement "We Can" and Civic Montenegro.

4 Electoral programme of the citizen group "We Can."

5 Election platform - Coalition "Albanian Alliance" (Forca - Democratic Party - Democratic Union in Montenegro - Movement for Tuzi)

The **Albanian Forum**⁶ has devoted **1.70%** of its electoral programme to women's rights. In their programme segment titled "Women's Rights" this political entity states that it *particularly affirms gender equality and women's rights based on human dignity and contemporary principles of civilization*. Through the programme, they commit to continuing their support for affirmative policy measures as well as an equal increase in the participation of women in political, economic, and social life based on meritocracy.

The issues of women in the programme of the **Coalition TOGETHER! – For the Future That Belongs to You – Danijel Živković (DPS, SD, DUA, LP)**⁷ make up **2.35%** of the total programme. This coalition briefly prioritizes the development of female, creative and social entrepreneurship. They also pledge to work on strengthening the *"personnel capacity of educational institutions, as well as social care institutions with the aim of suppressing peer violence, violence against women, the elderly, etc"*. This political entity has announced the establishment of shelters for women victims of violence and legislative changes in sanctioning serious crimes, such as femicide, peer violence, violence against the elderly, etc.

The electoral programme of the **movement Reversal**⁸ give the importance of gender equality in only **0.30%** of its content. In the section titled "Human Rights," a single sentence states the need for *"promoting gender equality at all levels, with a special focus on equal rights in the private sphere but also in the workplace."* Reversal also advocates for combating discrimination and stopping any form of discrimination.

⁶ Electoral and political programme of the Albanian Forum - Albanian Forum - Nik Gjelloshaj "BESA for European Development."

⁷ Electoral programme - Montenegro in Motion - Together!

⁸ Program of the movement Reversal is available at: <https://www.preokret.me/program>

Percentage of women on candidate lists hovered around the legal minimum

By analysing the candidate lists that participated in the parliamentary elections held on 11 June 2023, the research team of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) monitored compliance with the provisions of the **Law on the election of councillors and members of parliament** which prescribe at least 30% of candidates from the underrepresented sex and order of candidates, requiring that one candidate of that gender must be among each four candidates in the candidate list order, as an affirmative action measure. The aim was to determine the number i.e. percentage of the underrepresented gender (primarily referring to women) on the 15 candidate lists that participated in these elections. Additionally, a comparison was made with the previous parliamentary elections held on 30 August 2020, to track trends in the representation of women on candidate lists and the implementation of these affirmative action measures.

For the purposes of the study, all 15 candidate lists were analysed: *It's clear!* – Bosniak party – mr Ervin Ibrahimović; HGI – *On the right side of the world; "Justice for all!"* – dr Vladimir Lepasavić; SNP – DEMOS – *For you; People's coalition* – *"United and period"* (Dejan Vukšić – Christian Democratic Movement; Marko Milačić – True Montenegro; Vladislav Dajković – Free Montenegro; Dragica Perović – Democratic Serbian Party; dr Novica Stanić – Movement for Pljevlja); Albanian alliance – *Aleanca shqiptare*; *Reversal for a safe Montenegro* – Srđan Perić; *Movement for changes – Montenegro first* – Nebojša Medojević – *Reforms to save the country*; *Yes. We can for Civic Montenegro! TOGETHER! For the future that belongs to you* – Danijel Živković (DPS, SD, DUA, LP); *Europe now*– Milojko Spajić; SDP – *For our house*; *Aleksa and Dritan – Bravely! For the future of Montenegro* (New Serbian Democracy, Democratic People's Party of Montenegro, Labour Party); and *Albanian forum* – Nik Gjelošhaj *"BESA (PROMISE) for European development"* (Forumi shqiptar – Nik Gjelošhaj *"BESA për Zhvillim Evropian"*).

It's worth noting that 17 candidacies were submitted to the State Election Commission (SEC) for participation in the parliamentary elections, but two were rejected. These were the lists of *Montenegrin Civic Action* and the movement *La casa de papel*, which failed to adequately complete their documentation even after returning it for revision by SEC.⁹ Interestingly, the **list Yes. We can**

⁹ The *Montenegrin Civic Action* list was rejected because it lacked 35 valid signatures, and when it comes to the *La casa de papel* movement, the SEC could not clearly conclude who the movement represents, because in the election application it stated that it represents the Italian community in Montenegro, while in the program the aims of the movement are to represent the Croatian community in Montenegro

do for civic Montenegro! which was the only list led by a woman, was also sent back for revision because it lacked 170 signatures, but also because of the insufficient number of candidates of the underrepresented gender, which in the case of this list, were men.

The analysis of the 15 candidate lists indicates that all political entities complied with the legal framework requiring a at least 30% representation of the underrepresented gender. Additionally, all electoral actors had at least one candidate of the underrepresented gender among each four names on their candidate list order. However, practice has shown that the parties most often, as in the case of earlier electoral cycles, interpreted this quota literally, with few exceeding the legal minimum, while women were generally placed every fourth, eighth, twelfth, sixteenth, etc., position on the list, with each fourth, eighth, twelfth, sixteenth place was generally reserved for women, etc, **whereby the parties once again demonstrated their immaturity and fundamental misunderstanding of this measure of affirmative action.** This is supported by the fact that, although a certain numerical progress was recorded, especially on the lists of minority parties, **with the exception of the We can movement, which had a female leader, a woman was not in the first two places of any other candidate list.** Out of the first four places, six lists placed a woman in fourth place, seven in third place, the *SNP - Demos* list had a woman in both third and fourth place, while the *We can* movement had a man in fourth place. **The positioning of women in lower-ranked positions, particularly with the assumption that some smaller lists will not receive enough mandates for at least one woman from a specific party to enter the Parliament, speaks of a clear intention to disqualify women from key processes and to reduce their number even more in this convocation.**¹⁰

In conclusion, the analysis shows that **398** women that were on the candidate lists participated in the parliamentary elections, which is **35.76%** of the total number of participants (**1113**).

Candidate list	Number and percentage of representation of women on the list	Order of candidates on the list (1 out of 4 places)
It's clear! – Bosniak Party – Mr. Ervin Ibrahimović	33 (41%)	order applied
HGI – On the Right Side of the World	29 (41%)	order applied
Justice for All! Dr. Vladimir Lepasavić	17 (31%)	order applied
SNP – DEMOS – FOR YOU	26 (32%)	order applied
People's Coalition - "United and Period" – (Dejan Vukšić – Christian Democratic Movement, Marko Milačić – True Montenegro, Vladislav Dajković – Free Montenegro, Dragica Perović – Democratic Serbian Party, Dr. Novica Stanić – Movement for Pljevlja)	25 (31%)	order applied

¹⁰ In the constitutive convocation of the Parliament, out of a total of 81 parliamentary seats, only 17 (21%) will be allocated to women, and none of the nine lists that won mandates for the new parliamentary convocation will have more than 30% female MPs at the constitutive session, while as many as four lists that together have six seats do not have any women in their composition

Albanian Alliance – Aleanca Shqiptare	21 (31%)	order applied
Reversal for safe Montenegro – Srđan Perić	17 (31%)	order applied
Movement for Changes –MONTENEGRO FIRST – Nebojša Medojević – Reforms to save the country	30 (37%)	order applied
Yes. We can for a Civic Montenegro!	45 (58%)	order applied
Together! For the future that belongs to you – Danijel Živković (DPS, SD, DUA, LP)	32 (40%)	order applied
Europe Now – Milojko Spajić	28 (35%)	order applied
SDP – For Our House	26 (32%)	order applied
Aleksa and Dritan – We count bravely!	25 (31%)	order applied
For the Future of Montenegro (New Serbian Democracy, Democratic People’s Party, Labour Party)	26 (32%)	order applied
Albanian Forum – Nik Gjeloshaj “BESA for European Development” Forumi shqiptar – Nik Gjeloshaj “BESA per Zhvillim Evropian”	18 (30%)	order applied

Table 1. Representation of women on candidate lists for the 2023 parliamentary elections

In terms of percentage, women were least represented on the list of the **Albanian Forum – Nik Gjeloshaj “BESA for European Development” (Forumi shqiptar – Nik Gjeloshaj “BESA per Zhvillim Evropian”)**. This candidate list had only **18** or **30%** women out of **60** parliamentary candidates, which is the minimum required by the legally prescribed quota for the underrepresented sex.

Other lists, such as **Justice for all! – dr Vladimir Leposavić; People’s coalition – United and period, Albanian alliance– Aleanca Shqiptare, Reversal for a safe Montenegro – Srđan Perić, and Aleksa i Dritan –Bravely!** did not deviate much from the legal minimum either. Common to these candidate lists is the percentage of representation of women on them - **31%**.

Among the lists that had a significantly higher percentage of women compared to the ones mentioned above, the **Yes. We can for civic Montenegro!** list stands out with **58%**, i.e., 45 women out of the total number of candidates. This represents a particular characteristic of the electoral offer in the political scene of Montenegro in terms of the representation and positioning of women on candidate lists, indicating that women are more valued and motivated when the list is led by a woman. In addition, the lists of **HGI** and **BS**, parties that represent less numerous peoples, and which had **41%** of women on their lists, should also be highlighted. Furthermore, the **TOGETHER!** candidate list led by the DPS had **32** women out of the total number of candidates, i.e., **40%**. The **Movement Europe**

now follows with **35%**, while all other lists hovered around the legal minimum.

CCE made a comparison with the parliamentary elections held in 2020. At that time, there were a total of **778 candidates of both genders** on **11 candidate lists**, with **269** or **34.58%** female candidates which is **approximately 1% less than the percentage from the 2023 elections (35.76%)**. Even then, only one list was led by a woman (Draginja Vuksanović Stanković – SDP – Strong Montenegro!), and half of the parties merely formally complied with the legal minimum. The similarity is also that even then the minority parties (BS and HGI) stood out in terms of the percentage of women on their lists, while SD, which ran independently, had 40% women, and the Croatian Reform Party had as many as 69% women, even higher than We can movement in the 2023 elections.

However, as already stated, this small progress in the total numbers do not and cannot bring about a qualitative change and does not represent an adequate measure of future women’s representation in the Parliament as long as quotas are taken formally, without genuine intention to enable better positioning of women as the underrepresented sex.

Candidate list	Number and percentage of representation of women on the list	Order of candidates on the list (1 out of 4 places)
Social Democrats - Ivan Brajović - CONSISTENTLY	33 (40.74%)	order applied
Bosniak Party - Correctly - Rafet Husović	29 (35.80%)	order applied
HGI. Wholeheartedly for Montenegro!	19 (36.54%)	order applied
SDP – Strong Montenegro!	27 (33.33%)	order applied
Croatian Reform Party of Montenegro – CRP	20 (69%)	order applied
Dr. Dritan Abazović – Black on White – Dr. Srđan Pavićević – (URA Civic Movement, Justice and Reconciliation Party, CIVIS Group of Voters, and Independent Intellectuals) – Citizens!	26 (32.10%)	order applied
Albanian Coalition “Unanimously” (Democratic Party, Democratic Union of Albanians, and Democratic Alliance in Montenegro) - Koalicioni shqiptar „Bashkë nji za“ Partia Demokratike, Unioni Demokratik i Shqiptarëve dhe Lidhja Demokratike në Mal të Zi	15 (30.60%)	order applied
Decisively for Montenegro! DPS – Milo Đukanović	25 (30.86%)	order applied

For the Future of Montenegro – Democratic Front (New Serbian Democracy, Movement for Change, Democratic People’s Party), Socialist People’s Party of Montenegro, True Montenegro, United Montenegro, Workers’ Party, Party of Associated Pensioners and Disabled of Montenegro, Yugoslav Communist Party of Montenegro, Serbian Radical Party, Party of Pensioners, Disabled, and Social Justice of Montenegro	25 (30.86%)	order applied
Albanian list – Genci Nimanbegu, Nik Gjeloshaj / Lista Shqiptare – Genci Nimanbegu, Nik Gjeloshaj”	25 (30.86%)	order applied
Aleksa Bečić - Miodrag Lekić - “Peace is Our Nation” - Democrats - Democratic Montenegro - Demos – Party of Pensioners, Disabled and Restitution - GP Nova Left	25 (30.86%)	order applied

Table 2. Representation of women on candidate lists for the 2020 parliamentary elections

Media interested in the campaign, parties not addressing gender equality issues

For the purposes of this project, a media content monitoring was conducted with the aim of assessing the representation of topics related to gender equality, the participation of women in pre-election communication/public activities, and their presence in media content compared to men. Additionally, the monitoring aimed to show how much candidate lists were represented in the content of monitored media, in how many announcements the candidates (both male and female) were mentioned and the ratio of the announcements.

The monitoring covered 25 media outlets, which is the largest number of analysed media compared to all previous projects implemented by CCE. Specifically, the monitoring included **10 television stations** – TVCG, TV Vijesti, Nova M, Prva TV, Adria TV, Gradska TV, TV E, TV 7, TV A+, PINK M, as well as **3 daily newspapers** – Dan, Vijesti, Pobjeda and **12 portals** – Vijesti, CdM, Analitika, RTCG, Antena M, IN4S, Standard, Gradski, Borba, Dan, Pobjeda, Aktuelno.

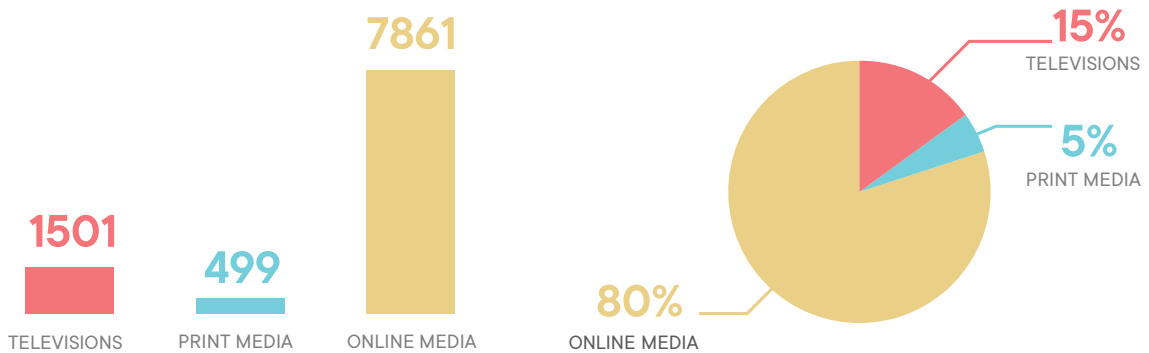
According to the data from the State Election Commission (SEC), 101 members of journalistic editorial teams (journalists, cameramen, photographers, editors, technicians) from Montenegro, region, and abroad were accredited to monitor the campaign for parliamentary elections.

General Overview

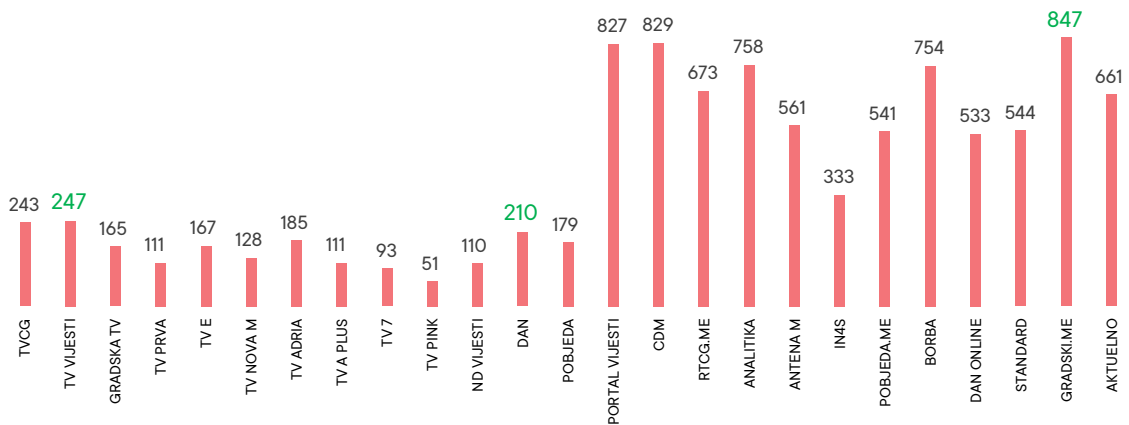
During monitoring the content of the given media in the period from 11 May to 9 June 2023, a total of **9,861 media announcements** related to the parliamentary elections in Montenegro were recorded.¹¹ Due to differences in the functioning of the three types of monitored media, including the available media space for disseminating information, as well as in the number of monitored media, as expected – online portals led in terms of the presence of information related to parliamentary elections, with 7,861 media announcements (80%). Both the total number of announcements and the number of announcements by media type indicate a significant media presence of the monitored topic, which, on the one hand, indicates that citizens are well informed and, on the other hand, their high exposure to information that can ultimately lead to confusion in personal choices. The portal Gradski.me had

¹¹ Media monitoring was concluded on Friday, 9 June at 00:00, coinciding with the beginning of the electoral silence period.

the highest number of announcements among all portals, the daily newspaper “Dan” among print media, and TV Vijesti among televisions.



Graphs 1 and 2. Number of announcements and % by types of media



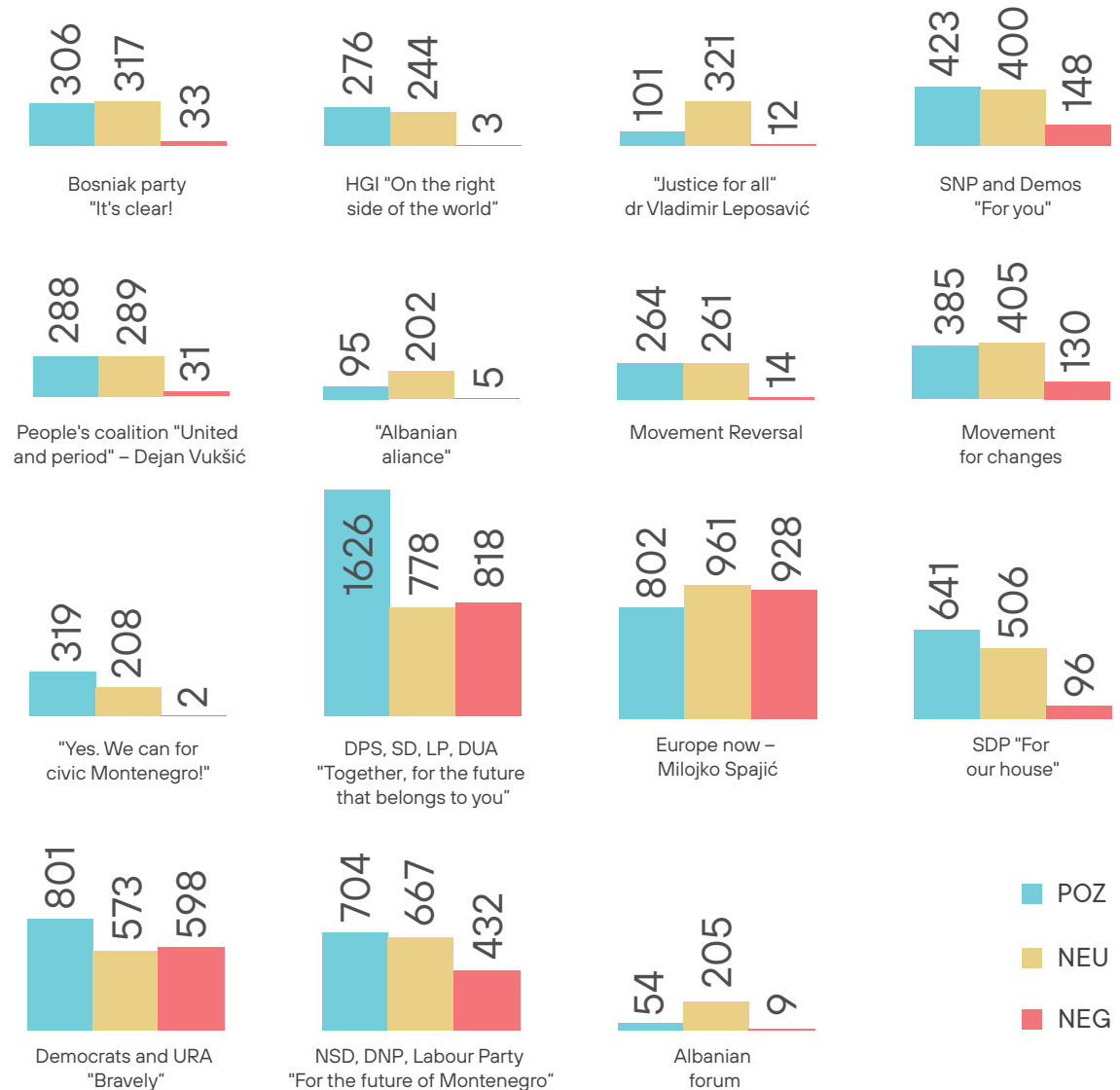
Graph 3. Number of announcements by individual media

While in the first part of the campaign no significant polemics of political competition were noticed, the second part of the campaign (after 22 May) the so-called attacking, i.e. negative campaign is recorded. Namely, political entities did utilize available media space to present their party programmes, but many parties and coalitions also used this opportunity to attack their political competitors. Many of the observed polemics were determined both by the campaign and cases that occurred during the campaign period (e.g., the “Do Kwon” case”).

Analysis of media presence of candidate lists

The most present in the media during the pre-election campaign was the list led by the DPS with 3222 media announcements. However, this does not necessarily mean that this list was well-represented

or that in this number of media announcements had the opportunity to address the citizens. On the contrary, a significant number of mentions of this list were unplanned (mentioned by the media, analysts, the SEC, and often by political competitors), and potentially with a negative tone. This list generated 818 negative announcements, which is 25% of the total media mentions of this list. In percentages, only the list led by the Movement Europe Now had a worse ratio of announcements of different tone, with 34% (928 negative announcements), indicating that the DPS is no longer the only political party that receives negative criticism from other political entities.

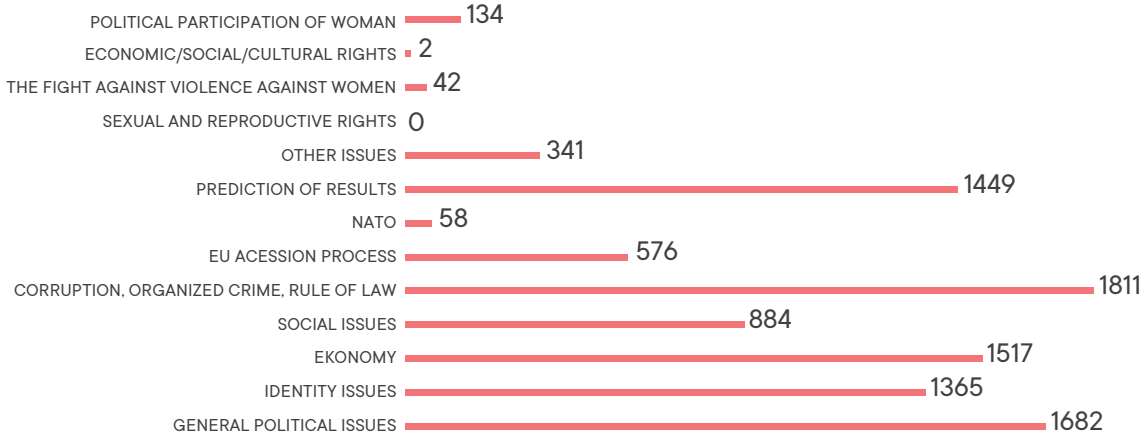


Graph 4. Number of announcements of different tone - by lists individually

Media polarization is most evident in the tone of media announcements concerning the most popular political entities. When it comes to the top 5 popular political entities, **Europe Now** had the highest number of positive announcements on the Vijesti portal - 68, and the highest number of negative mentions on the Borba portal - 125, while the coalition gathered around the **DPS** had the highest number of positive announcements on the Gradski.me portal - 168, and the highest number of negative announcements on the Borba portal - 114. Coalition **“For the Future of Montenegro”** had the highest number of positive announcements on the Borba portal - 82, and the highest number of negative announcements on the Gradski.me portal - 58. The **Democrats - URA** coalition had the highest number of positive media announcements on the Vijesti portal - 87, and the highest number of negative announcements on the Gradski.me portal - 69. The **Bosniak Party** generated an extremely small number of negative announcements, with the highest number of them on the Borba portal - 5, while the highest number of positive announcements was on the public service portal RTCG.me - 24.

Representation of themes in the election campaign

In the overall narrative created by all political entities during the pre-election campaign, the dominant theme is “corruption/crime/rule of law,” followed by “general political issues”, “economy and business”, and “prediction of results and prognosis”. Some political entities whose previous political narrative was characterized by a specific tone (identity issues, crime, and corruption, etc.) significantly adjusted their media appearance and adapted to political competition (economy, social issues, etc.). The representation of themes related to gender equality was extremely low. Only one topic related to gender equality, specifically “women’s political participation,” exceeded 1% in the overall coverage, while the media presence of other monitored themes concerning gender equality is below 1% or completely absent.



Graph 5. Number of announcements – THEMES that were discussed by the participants of the election - PRIMARY PRESENT

The review of themes indicates that the overall narrative during the pre-election campaign, in comparison to previously monitored campaigns, has shifted significantly towards economic topics and those concerning citizens’ quality of life, but that a significant level of mention of identity issues

was maintained, although formulated differently. Additionally, the analysis of primary issues addressed by each list brings another confirmation of a **general lack of interest among participants in the parliamentary elections in gender equality issue**, which further suggests that political parties believe that gender-related issues will not significantly impact voters' decisions.

- **Identity issues** were more prominently discussed by minority parties, HGI and BS, than SDP, the coalition For the Future of Montenegro (ZBCG), and the coalition assembled by DPS. The coalition gathered around DPS indirectly addressed identity issues through emphasizing Montenegro's European identity and the need for Montenegro to restore "jeopardized multi-ethnic harmony and return to the EU path." The SDP list from the very name (For our house) emphasized the component of identity affiliation, while other mentioned lists stressed specific national identities (the interests of Bosniaks, Croats, Albanians, Serbs, etc.). The significant rise in the presence of this issue in the narrative was due to specific incidents during the observed period, which were not directly related to the pre-election campaign. The first case "provoked" by the events in Kosovo at the time was part of a specific election campaign (a protest gathering in Nikšić led by the ZBCG coalition). The second relates to the "Vraneš" case i.e. reaction to the controversial statement by Darko Vraneš, the president of the Municipality of Pljevlja, regarding the marking of 21 May - Montenegro Independence Day.
- **Social issues** were significantly represented in the overall narrative, mainly addressing housing, the ability to purchase or rent properties, but also family support and social benefits, youth support, healthcare - to a lesser extent. Topics related to culture were completely absent. In terms of the number of mentions of "social issues," - lists "Reversal", "We can", SNP and Demos stood out. Other presented lists also addressed this issue, but to a statistically lesser extent compared to the representation of other issues in their overall planned narratives.
- The "**corruption, crime, rule of law**" issue was predominantly taken up by the Coalition "**Bravely**" which consisted of the Democrats of Montenegro and URA, although this theme was also quite present in the planned narratives of the ZBCG, PzP (the political constituents of the former Democratic Front - DF), but also the list of the movement Europe Now, "People's Coalition", the list led by Vladimir Leposavić. The more significant presence of this theme in the planned narrative of the coalition led by DPS was noticed in the second part of the election campaign as a response to the overall narrative created in that period. Namely, although this theme was extensively mentioned by many political subjects/lists before (the first part of the campaign, prior to the "Do Kwon" case), its rapid increase was triggered by media exposure of the "Do Kwon" case i.e. the mention of alleged connections Miloško Spajić, leader of the list Europe now! with a disreputable South Korean citizen arrested in Montenegro on an Interpol warrant. This issue was marked by negative campaigning, i.e. parties frequently criticized each other (the so-called attack campaign) pointing to the alleged criminal activities of other lists.
- Support for European integration was expressed by all participants in the 2023 parliamentary elections through a significant number of announcements by all parties and coalitions related to **EU integration** but also through frequent mentions of "European values" as values around which exist general agreement. However, minority parties, SDP, and the coalition led by DPS stood out in terms of the number of mentions of this theme. On the other hand, **NATO** as a topic

was not high on the agenda of any party, except during the anniversary of Montenegro's NATO membership when the coalition gathered around DPS, HGI, BS, and PES expressed support for Montenegro's membership in this international organization. This generated the highest number of primary mentions of this topic.

- All coalitions and parties that participated independently in the elections addressed the “**economy**” issue, while Europe Now! movement was taking the lead. Apart from the fact that this party presented issues from this corpus in the campaign, these issues were most often addressed to her as criticism by other parties.

As previously mentioned, gender equality-related topics had rather low presence in the primary level of media analysis. **Only 178 announcements addressing these issues as primary were recorded (134 posts on “women’s political participation”, 42 on “violence against women – fight against violence,” and 2 related to “economic, social, and cultural rights of women”)**. Considering the total number of announcements related to parliamentary elections (9861 posts), **issues related to gender equality take only about 2%**. They mostly related to “women’s political participation” and were primarily present in the second part of the pre-election campaign, precisely - after NGOs noted the low and insufficient representation of gender-related information in the previous narrative in the pre-election campaign based on the presentation of the results of media content monitoring and other types of research. Therefore, although political entities may claim that gender equality was planned on their agendas during the pre-election campaigns, it was the NGO sector that exerted positive pressure on political actors, provoking at least some overall media representation of gender equality-related topics.

IN THE OVERALL NARRATIVE DURING THE PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN, GENDER EQUALITY WAS PRESENT IN ONLY 2% OF THE POSTS

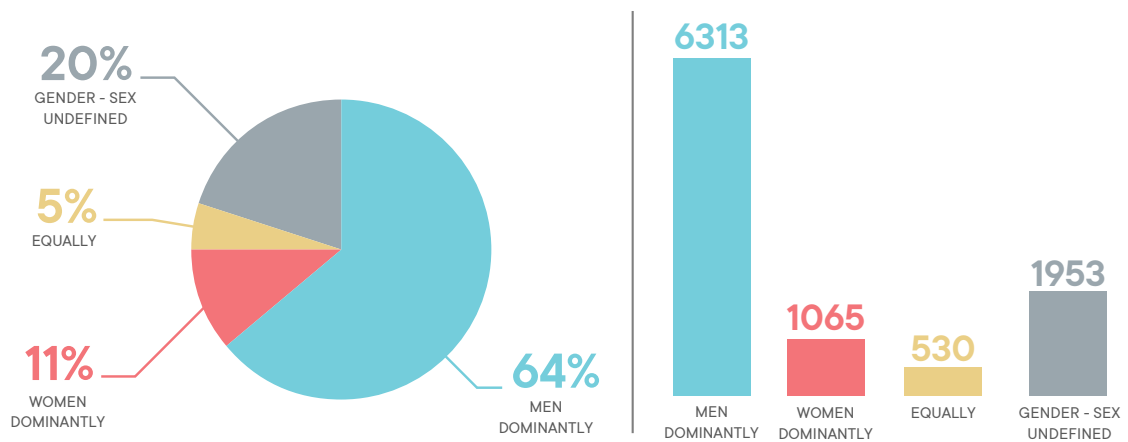
SENTIMENT OF ANNOUNCEMENTS REGARDING WOMEN



Sentiment was assigned to announcements on parliamentary elections in relation to the image they create about women. Thus, total of 343 positive sentiments (**representing only 3% of posts creating a positive image of women**), 9503 neutral sentiments and 15 negative sentiments of which 2 were explicitly negative were recorded.

In the media announcements related to the main monitored topic (parliamentary elections 2023), narrative was also determined, in relation to sex, i.e., gender. Specifically, a categorization was made into announcements dominated by a female voice (views expressed by women), male voice, announcements with an equal balance of male and female voices, and announcements that could not be characterized

in terms of gender or sex (undefined gender - general). **In the overall narrative created during the pre-election campaign, the male voice dominates within 6313 announcements (64%). The female voice as the dominant voice appears in 1065 media announcements, i.e., 11%.**

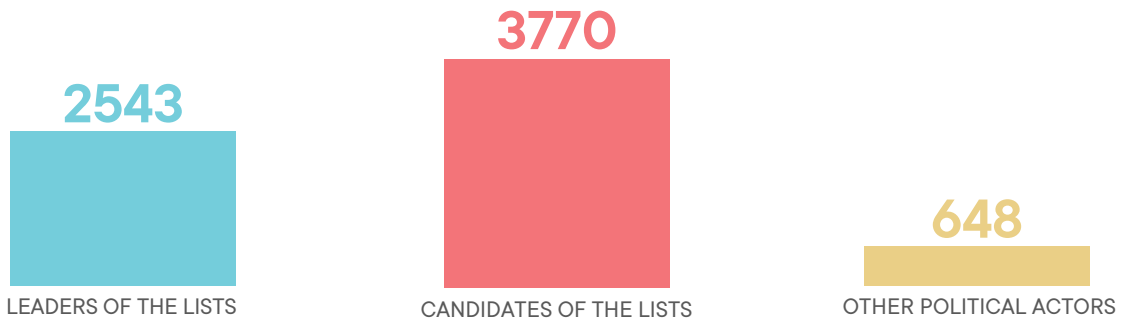


Graphs 6 and 7. Representation of narratives in relation to sex/gender (number of announcements and %) - (TOPIC - PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2023)

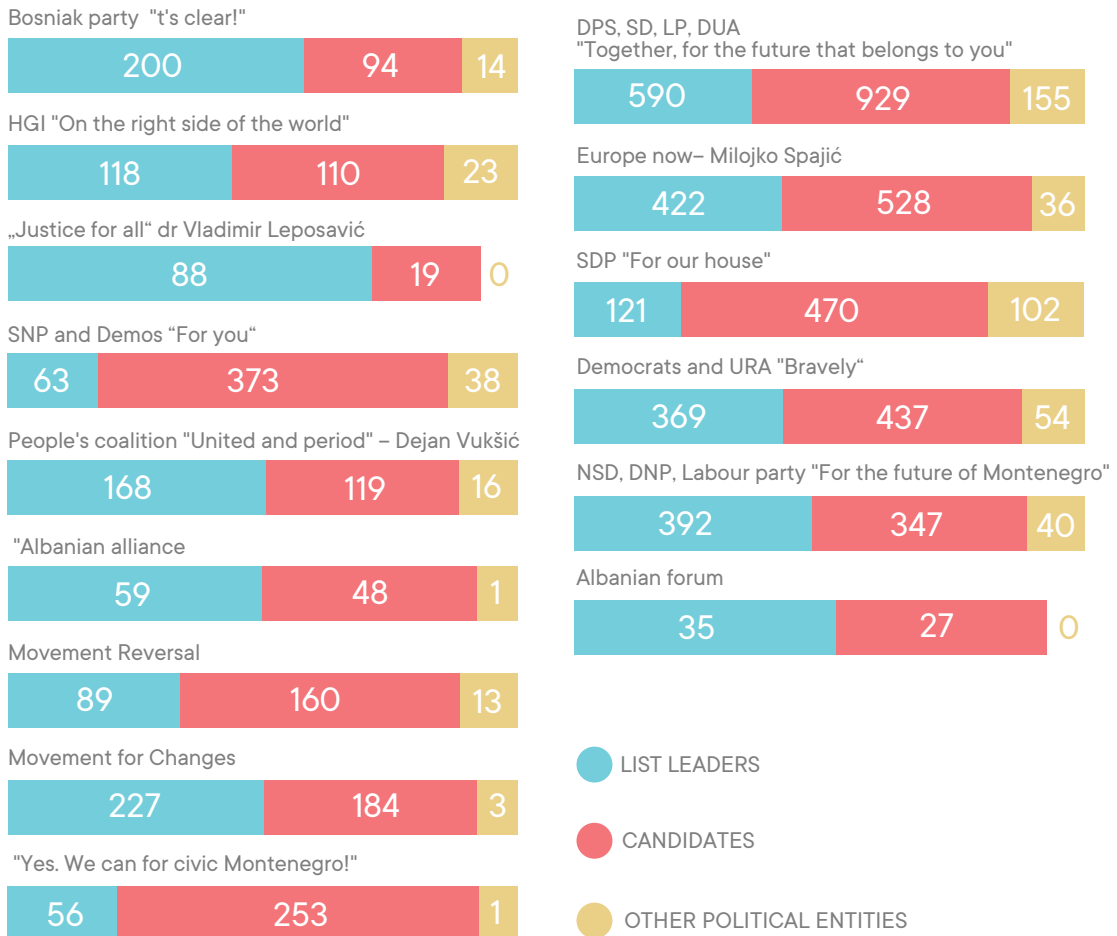
The dominance of the male voice over the female voice is a clear message about the insufficient representation of women in politics in Montenegro and their side treatment in the electoral process. The lower number of announcements with a dominant female voice could also be related to the fact that only one candidate list was led by a woman and that there were a small number of women at the top of candidate lists. At the same time, it was noticed that women were the ones primarily addressing topics related to gender/women’s rights, and as stereotypically expected, women most often spoke about social issues. In a slightly larger number of announcements, the female voice dominated in announcements related to identity issues. Topics - economy, corruption, and crime – those that are probably perceived as more important by the general public – were almost exclusively reserved for men.

For the purpose of analysing media presence, both the theme “parliamentary elections 2023” and the media presence of candidate lists, announcements were assigned the “role” parameter based on their content and representation of political views. This analytical parameter shows the extent to which participants in the parliamentary elections appeared in the media, including list leaders, candidates from candidate lists, and other political entities who are not on candidate lists but involved in the political campaign (other politicians from political parties that either independently ran in the elections or within coalitions and alliances). In total, the highest number of planned media appearances by participants in parliamentary elections contains the views of candidates, i.e., without the specific presence of the list leader’s views (3770 media announcements), while the views of list leaders (mostly as dominant) are present in 2543 media announcements. Other political entities (other party politicians, spokespersons, other party and state or local government officials, etc.) promoted the lists of the parties to which they belong in 648 media announcements. At some lists, there is a noticeable communication through the list leaders, which confirms the earlier narratives

that political parties in Montenegro are predominantly leader-oriented. More precisely, this was dominant in the lists led by Ervin Ibrahimović (BS) and Vladimir Leposavić with his coalition.



Graph 8. Roles of campaign actors (planned media appearances) (TOPIC – PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2023)



Graph 9. Roles of campaign actors (planned media appearances – LISTS INDIVIDUALLY)

Qualitative Review - Gender Equality

The representation of women in the media narrative during the pre-election campaign was significantly lower compared to the media representation of men. Gender equality issues are categorized into four thematic units: 1) political participation of women, 2) economic, social, and cultural rights of women, 3) violence against women, and 4) sexual and reproductive rights of women, which could only be sporadically found in the media appearances of representatives and candidates from the monitored candidate lists. Rare cases involved concrete discussions of this topic through affirmative approaches to gender equality and the problematization of low participation of women in politics, mostly at the initiative of the NGO sector. The overall narrative on gender equality issues predominantly came from women themselves. Examples of concrete actions, in primary or secondary level, can be found in the media statements of representatives of the civil society sector. In this regard, CCE (Centre for Civic Education), Women's Rights Center (WRC), and the Association Spektra stood out in particular. WRC and Spektra on two occasions presented the results of an analysis, indicating that the majority of candidate lists only meet the minimum requirements regarding the application of quotas for underrepresented sex, noting that only one list is led by a woman. These two NGOs assessed that gender equality is almost exclusively observed through the prism of gender-based violence, which is also inadequately addressed. After the completion of the first section of the monitoring of media content and social media, CCE presented data that, inter alia, also refer to the gender equality topic. It was concluded that gender equality issues remained on the margins both in the media and social media content. CCE published a publication titled "*Whom does Montenegro choose – Gender, Age, Geographic, and Professional Structure of Candidate Lists in the 2023 Parliamentary Elections*,"¹² which further elaborates on the topic of the equality of male and female candidates from candidate lists in various domains.

A media announcement on the portal *Aktuelno* titled "*Departure of the starlets of political prostitution*"¹³, published on 19 May 2023, serves as an example of aimed and highly negative targeting of two female MPs, Božena Jelušić and Suada Zoronjić. In response to this came reactions from the civil sector, female candidates from another candidate lists and Božena Jelušić herself. After that, mentioned portal published another media announcement as a reaction to public condemnation, titled "*Labelling will not intimidate Portal Aktuelno!*"¹⁴ in which they continued with negative qualifications of the mentioned politicians, as well as the President of the Montenegrin Parliament, Danijela Đurović.

When it comes to fundamental dealing with gender equality issue by representatives of candidate lists, it is negligible in the overall narrative created.

Overview:

- The coalition list "**Together! For the Future that Belongs to You - Danijel Živković**" during the presentation of their candidates in Bar told the public that it stands out for the highest

¹² Available at: <https://cgo-cce.org/2023/06/06/koga-crna-gora-bira/>

¹³ Available at: <https://www.aktuelno.me/politika/odlazak-starleta-politicke-prostitucije/>

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.aktuelno.me/politika/etiketiranje-nece-zaustaviti-portal-aktuelno/>

percentage of women compared to other candidate lists. Among the positive announcements about gender equality, Ivana Raščanin Radičević, a candidate from this list, stood out with repeated raising the issue of women's political participation in the context of misogyny and violence against women who choose to engage in some form of political activism in Montenegro. Boris Mugoša spoke about women's economic, social, and cultural rights, emphasizing that women's economic empowerment and gender equality are some of the key prerequisites for stable economic development.

- The Civic Movement “**Yes. We can for civic Montenegro!**” emphasized that more than half of their list consists of women. „List of the movement We Can represents a novelty not only in its composition, primarily made up of members of the *fairer sex* but also in terms of the fact that these individuals have not been part of Montenegro's political life before” stated from this list. In this specific case, although there was affirmative accent on gender equality and women's political participation, it was accompanied by stereotypical qualification of *women as fairer sex*. Additionally, the media reported that this list was sent back for revision because “it lacked 170 signatures, and among each four candidates for MPs, there was not at least one member of the underrepresented sex (male).” They also pointed out that some female candidates from the list were fired from their jobs due to their civic engagement, which is unacceptable in democratic societies. Sandra Muratović Čvorović, a candidate from this list, pointed to the obstacles to achieving a higher level of political participation, social, economic, and cultural rights of women in Montenegro in her media appearance “*Today's challenges of gender equality in Montenegro*”.
- Anika Bajić, MP candidate from the **Movement for Changes**, was present in the media regarding the gender equality issue, emphasizing that practice shows that men still dominate decision-making positions, that women do not have equal opportunities in employment, that every third woman experiences some form of violence, etc.
- Candidates for MP from the “**SNP-DEMOS-For You**” coalition stated that Montenegro has a legal framework in place to prevent discrimination against women but that these norms are not applied in practice, i.e substantive gender equality is lacking. Women were mentioned several times by this coalition, but not directly in the context of gender equality, but rather in the context of measures to stimulate childbirth in Montenegro (maternity leave of 18 months for the first child, two years for the second and each subsequent child, but also that the employer cannot terminate the employment of a woman who returns from maternity leave for the next 12 months).
- Amina Cikotić, a MP candidate from the list “**SDP - For Our House**”, stated that a billboard with her image in her hometown of Petnjica was destroyed and replaced with another. This particular case was not interpreted through the wider context of the political participation of women or some kind of violence against women; instead, the context, at least in media content, remained entirely political. Later, the coalition *Bravely* reported “*intentional and coordinated destruction of billboards*” of their list; however, this case could not be linked to gender equality.
- The **Bosniak Party**, when announcing its participation in the parliamentary elections, mentioned at the very end and sporadically that their focus would be “the position of youth and women.”

It is affirmative that the stereotypical mention of women was recorded in only a few sporadic examples. Milan Knežević, the leader of the list For the Future of Montenegro, when addressing the

public regarding his pre-election promises and the promises of his political opponents (movement Europe Now - PES), stated:¹⁵

Он је додао да грађанима не може обежати да ће их јурити Сингапурке, Јапанке и Францускиње и да ће резати вене за нама јер „не режу за њим“, и жели да будем поштен према вама.

In the announcement “The End of DPS, the Beginning of Confusion”¹⁶ on the *Borba* portal, inter alia, is stated: “Something was missing on the political scene in Montenegro. I pondered what, and suddenly it hit me! Oh, yes, Vuković Kuč Aleksandra, the poetess who (heartfelt congratulations!), in the meantime, entered the sacred institution of marriage, apparently disregarding Socrate’s advice – “Marry, and you will regret it; don’t marry, you will also regret it.” A genius of irony, I swear - she’s right.” The text was published as a column. It unnecessarily raised the issue of someone’s marital status. Since no one previously found it necessary to comment on the marriage of any of the male/female candidates from the lists, the question arises as to why it was needed in the case of Vuković Kuč.

An announcement in the newspaper *Pobjeda*, but also on the portal of the same name, contained a dose of sexism in the column “At the therapy” by author Milorad Pustahija, who, in an attempt to sarcastically present list leader, referred to women as “hens” who will be “promised” as part of the programme.¹⁷

Prvo o Spajketu i „Evropi sad 2“. Na što će izaći njihova ponuda - ne zna se ni pet dana pred izbore, jer neprekidno mijenjaju strane i stavove i kadrovsku strukturu i možda ćemo u neđelju imati ponudu „Evropa sad 5“. Ono što sada znamo je sljedeće: minimalna zarada 700 eura, minimalna penzija 450 eura, radni dan 7 sati. I, za sada najnovije obećanje - „Zdrav pojedinac je залог за budućnost - Zdravlje sad“. Hej, Spajke, jesi li zaboravio da si razvalio zdravlje? Ali, nema problema, možeš kao interkontinentalni sex guru obećati momcima program „Koke k'o salate sad 2“.

Analysis of the presence of women and men on billboards and in political TV video clips

The monitoring analysed how political parties and movements communicated gender equality directly and indirectly using billboards and political video clips. Gender balance was operationalized through two main dimensions - the dimension of presence and the dimension of “presence quality.” Presence refers to the ratio of the number of men or women appearing in various roles on billboards

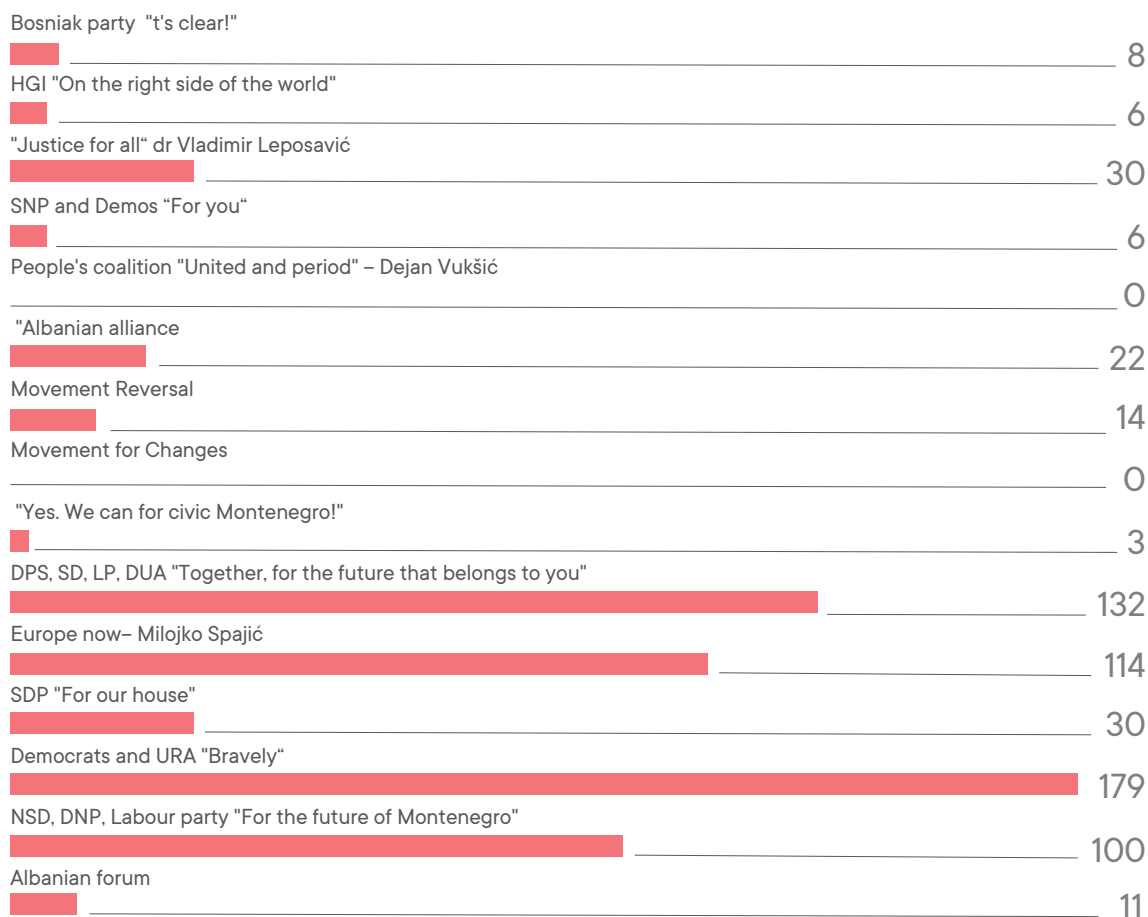
¹⁵ Available at: <https://www.aktuelno.me/politika/etiketiranje-nece-zaustaviti-portal-aktuelno/>

¹⁶ Available at: <https://www.in4s.net/knezevic-zajedno-sa-srbijom-otvaramo-dvije-fabrike-na-sjeveru-crne-gore-radnicima-cemo-povecati-platu-do-13-odsto/>

¹⁷ Available at: <https://borba.me/kraj-dps-a-pocetak-konfuzije/>

and in political video clips. The “presence quality” dimension was further monitored through three sub-indicators - sexualization, stereotyping and role. Quality indicators are important because the pressure, mainly from civil sector, has contributed to the fact that consultants who design political campaigns start considering the gender balance. Unfortunately, so far this balance has mainly been related to descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1967) – i.e. the physical presence of an equal number of men and women in the campaign. This has often resulted in women appearing as “decoration”, which reinforces stereotypes but also additionally mobilizes opponents of gender equality who see in this approach proof of women’s presence as merely formal. This represents the main characteristic of these elections.

A total of 655 individual billboards in 21 municipalities where parties advertised using this political marketing tool were analysed. The list “Aleksa and Dritan –Bravely” had the most billboards - 27.3% or 179 billboards, followed by the list “Together for the Future that Belongs to You - Danijel Živković” - 20.3% or 132 billboards, while the Movement European Now with 17.4% or 114 billboards came in third place.

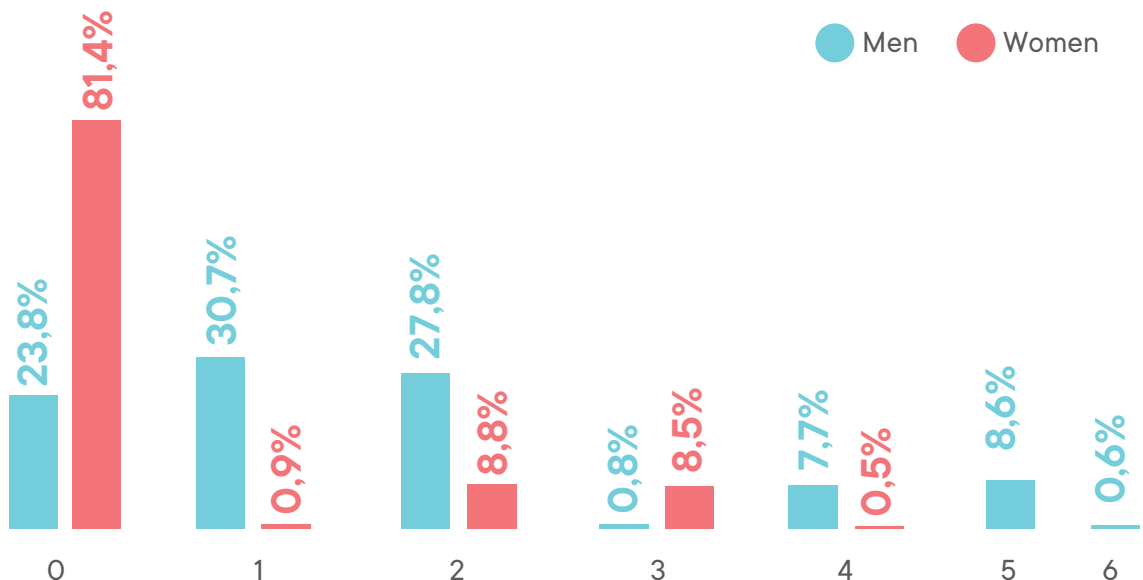


Grafik 10. Broj bilborda po izbornim listama

Also, 220 political TV video clips which were broadcast on nine TV stations were analysed, and 5 June 2023 was selected as the sample day for reviewing the clips.

The quantitative analysis of billboards shows that the 2023 parliamentary elections are characterized by the absence of women in the political campaign, which corresponds to the fact that list leaders, who are all men with one exception, are most shown on them. In cases where groups of people are shown, campaigns portrayed mixed groups - both men and women. However, even in those situations, women are usually in the background and are fewer in number. An exception was the “We Can” candidate list. But, since a woman led this list, it only confirms the rule that the dominant tone of the list depends on its leader. Two candidate lists did not advertise through billboards - the People’s Coalition and the Movement for Changes. The only female list leader Dr. Dragica Perović Ivanović was from the candidate list “Yes. We Can for Civic Montenegro”.

On most billboards (53.6%), only one figure was present. As many as 81.4% of billboards did not have female figures, and the same applies in 23.8% of billboards when it comes to male figures. There are significant differences when it comes to one, two, or more figures, in favour of men. Women most often appear on billboards showing a group of male and female candidates from the list, usually two or three persons. However, even in that type of billboard, apart from the We Can coalition, women are in the minority. Also, except for rare cases, women stand behind the main protagonist of the billboard, who is usually, although not always, the list leader. If we look at billboards with only one person, in 99% of cases, that person is a man and the list leader. This is consistent with the fact that only one out of 15 confirmed candidate lists had a woman as the list leader.



Graph 11. Presence of women and men on billboards (percentage display in relation to the number of figures on the billboard)

In the case of five candidate lists, there are no women on billboards at all (Albanian Alliance, Albanian Forum - Nik Đeljošaj, HGI and the People's Movement Justice for All, SNP-DEMOS), while in the case of another four, that percentage is less than 10%. The highest number of women is shown on billboards of the coalition "For the Future of Montenegro". This can be explained by the fact that this coalition mostly used a different type of billboard design – the one showing a group of male and female candidates.

The female figures on billboards are mostly conservatively and professionally dressed, with the same hairstyle and pose. During this election campaign, when it comes to billboards, there were no examples of using sexuality for promotional political purposes.

The list "We Can" is an exception to the above. In the visual presentation of the campaign of this list, women are in the foreground, whether female list leader or the female candidates. Women are shown in a business context and dominate the photography. Men are present but they are clearly in the background. For example, in the billboard shown below, there are two men, both clearly in the background, one of whom does not see half of his face.

In most clips are both men and women in everyday life scenes. The numerical ratio of male and female figures in the video clips is more balanced, with only 10.9% of them not featuring any women. However, although present, women in political clips often play a supporting and secondary role. In as much as 56.4% of the clips, women are present but without a voice. The research identified examples of stereotypical role assignment. A series of clips by the "For You" coalition - SNP and DEMOS - features women talking about stereotypically feminine issues (parenthood, maternity support programmes, newborn allowances, and education) and men discussing general social issues (pensions, international relations, diplomacy, and the development of the north of Montenegro). An example contrary to stereotypes are the video clips of the "We Can" coalition, in which women are shown in engineering jobs and traditionally male roles. Although explicit examples of using sexuality in the video clips were not recorded, a large number of shots showing the audience or larger groups of people focus on young beautiful women.

Women in the group say nothing



Women sporadically



Woman speaks, audio without character



No women



Woman speaks alone



Graph 12. presence of women and men in TV video clips (the role of women in TV video clips)

The research identified examples of using gender-insensitive language, although the dominant tone of political content, intentionally or not, was designed in gender-neutral forms.

Qualitative review of the visualization of media announcements

The analysis also included the visual representation of female images in media content about extraordinary parliamentary elections in Montenegro. These are media announcements that were created either entirely or partly because of engaging the media, i.e., journalists. It's important to note that in most reports media used photo and video materials provided by the political parties themselves, which conditioned the content they published.

Monitoring indicated a significant presence of women in media announcements, but men continued to dominate—both in announcements where individuals are the main actors, but also in announcement, videos and photos showing several persons, including women. The strong presence of women in the role of analysts is particularly noticeable — from leadership positions in civil society to professors, journalists/editors, and experts on economic issues. The fact that women were at the head of institutions important for the electoral process (Parliament of Montenegro, Agency for Prevention of Corruption, etc.) additionally influenced their greater presence and stronger positioning. In this campaign, unlike, for example, the local elections in 2022, the emphasis was not predominantly on the leaders of candidate lists. For some lists, communication with the public was highly focused on the list's leader, while other participants in the election race tried to put in the foreground a larger number of women who expressed their views related to the pre-election campaign, the party's programme, etc. Women giving statements were mostly shown in a professional environment (e.g., in the Parliament, at press positions in the parties, etc.). However, in fewer cases, women were shown as speakers at meetings where they addressed a larger audience, with one candidate list particularly standing out. In the positions of speakers at meetings—which reflect power and importance when addressing a crowd—mostly men were shown. In most cases, women were in the audience, listening to speakers and applauding. Footage of the submission of candidate lists were popular especially at the beginning of the pre-election campaign. Women were present in television content, especially those who were in the role of analysts. Women's presence in print media was less visible compared to men, especially regarding the presence of photos and position on the pages. The largest presence of women was on portals, due to the format of that media and the unlimited space they have for publishing. However, in several cases, negative portrayal of women was recorded, likely due to the insufficient technical attention of those who published the news which included photos showing only the torso of a woman without her head or photos where part of the head was “cut off.” The case of the photo of MP Paunović was the most negative example of visual depiction of women in the media during the monitored period. It can be assumed that this occurred due to technical oversight, as photo of both the man and the woman was published identically.

Ljolla: Nove političke snage nijesu pokazale da im je EU cilj, od građana zavisi kako će se država izvući iz ove situacije

11.04.2022 10:00



Paunović: Zalagaćemo se za uvođenje podstanarskog kartona

11.04.2022 10:00



Živković: Dosta je bilo ponižavanja Crne Gore, želimo političku stabilnost, ekonomski razvoj i normalan život

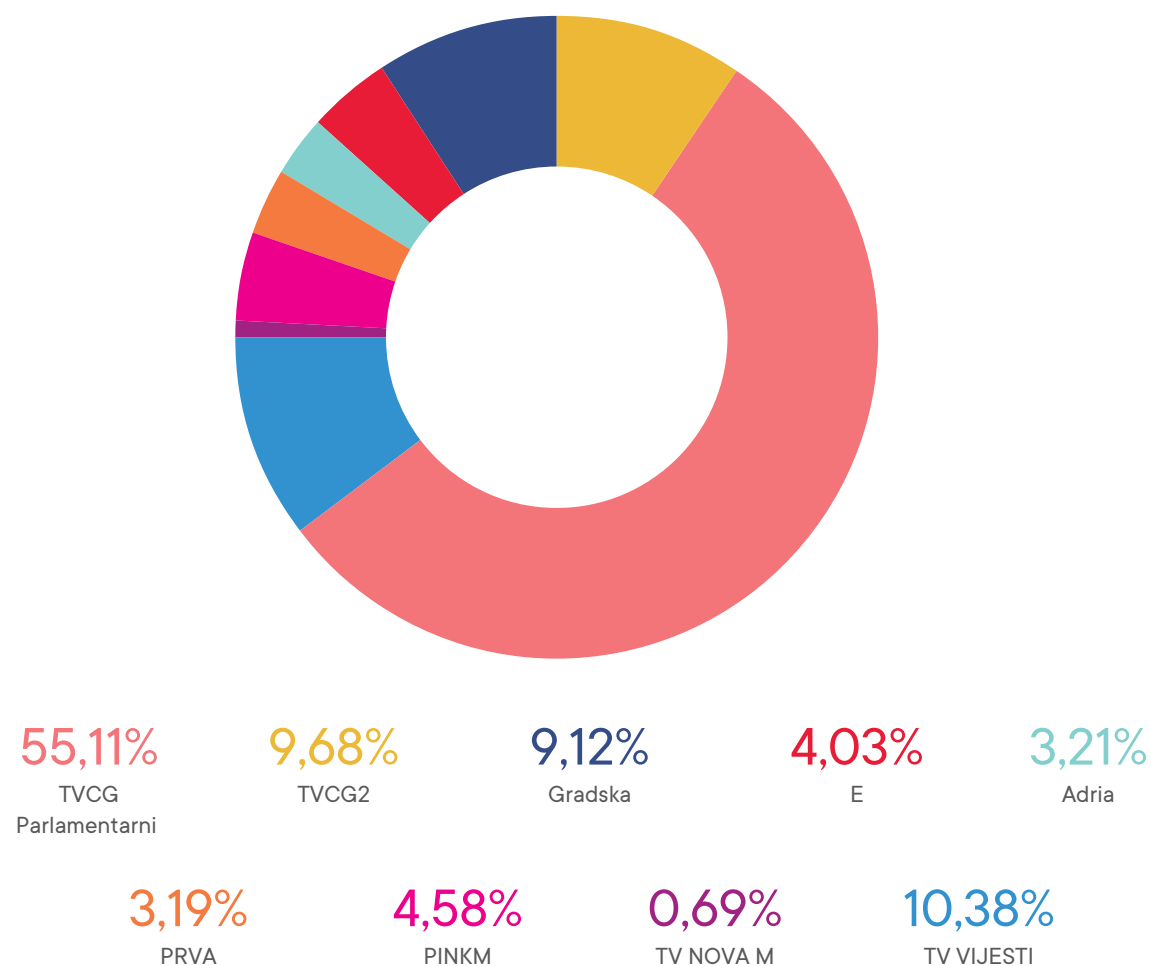
11.04.2022 10:00



The monitoring identified announcements where statements were given by women, female candidates of the lists, but without their photos or videos. For example, some statements by female candidates on TV were “covered” with footage from the submission of candidate lists in which they were not present or with logos and footage of male leader of the candidate list in which she was. An interesting detail noticed during the monitoring is that during the observed period female journalists predominantly reported on the elections in electronic media.

Monitoring of advertising

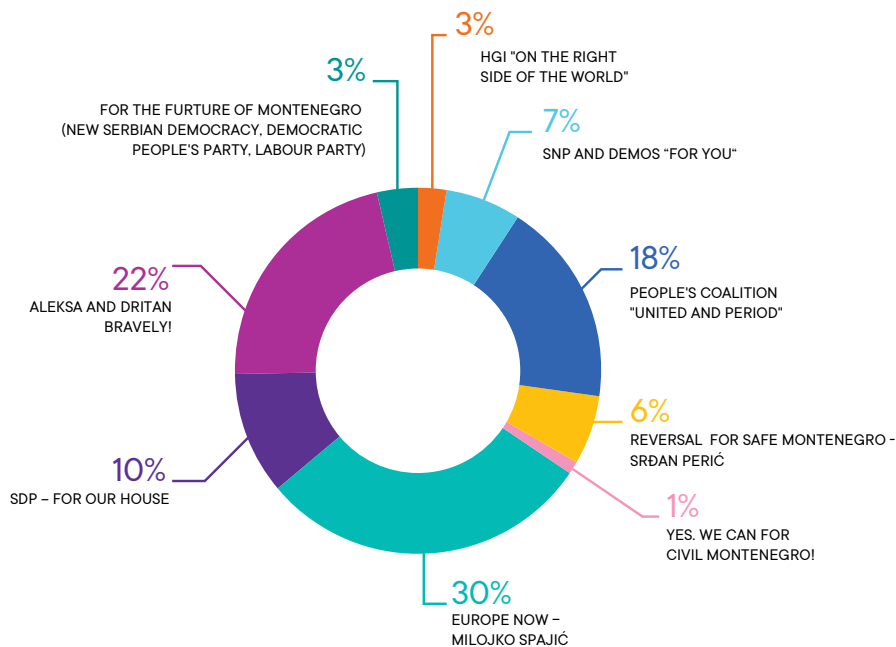
Monitoring of advertising on television showed that candidate lists in most cases used the opportunity for free advertising on the Public Broadcasting Service RTCG—nearly 65%, including the Parliamentary channel and TVCG2.



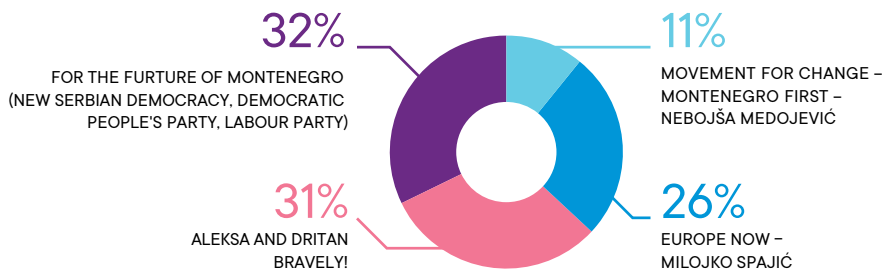
Graph13. Time of political propaganda TV video clips and reports broadcast on all television (expressed in percent)

When it comes to commercial television, the most advertised on **TV Vijesti** was Europe Now (30%), followed by the coalition Democrats – URA (22%), and then the People’s Coalition– United and period (18%), while the coalition gathered around DPS did not advertise on this television. Coalition “For the Future of Montenegro” (32%) was the most advertised on **TV PRVA**, followed by the Democrats - URA coalition (31%), and Europe Now (28%). The coalition gathered around DPS exclusively advertised on **TV E**, coalition Democrats - URA on **TV PINK M** and coalition “ For the Future of Montenegro” was exclusively on **TV Adria**. The coalition Democrats - URA was advertised on **TV Nova M** in **97%** of cases.

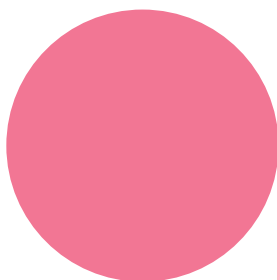
TV VIJESTI



TV PRVA



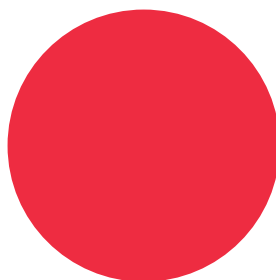
TV PINK M



100%

ALEKSA AND DRITAN
BRAVELY!

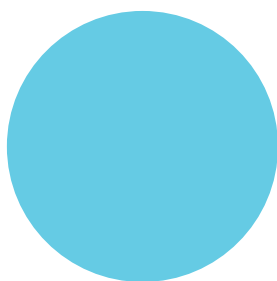
TV E



100%

TOGETHER! FOR THE FUTURE THAT BELONGS
TO YOU –DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ (DPS, SD, DUA, LP)

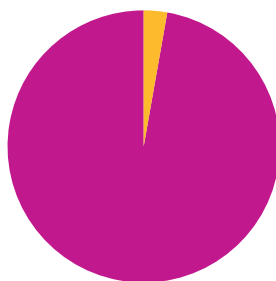
TV ADRIA



100%

FOR THE FUTURE OF MONTENEGRO
(NEW SERBIAN DEMOCRACY, DEMOCRATIC
PEOPLE'S PARTY, LABOUR PARTY)

TV NOVA



97%

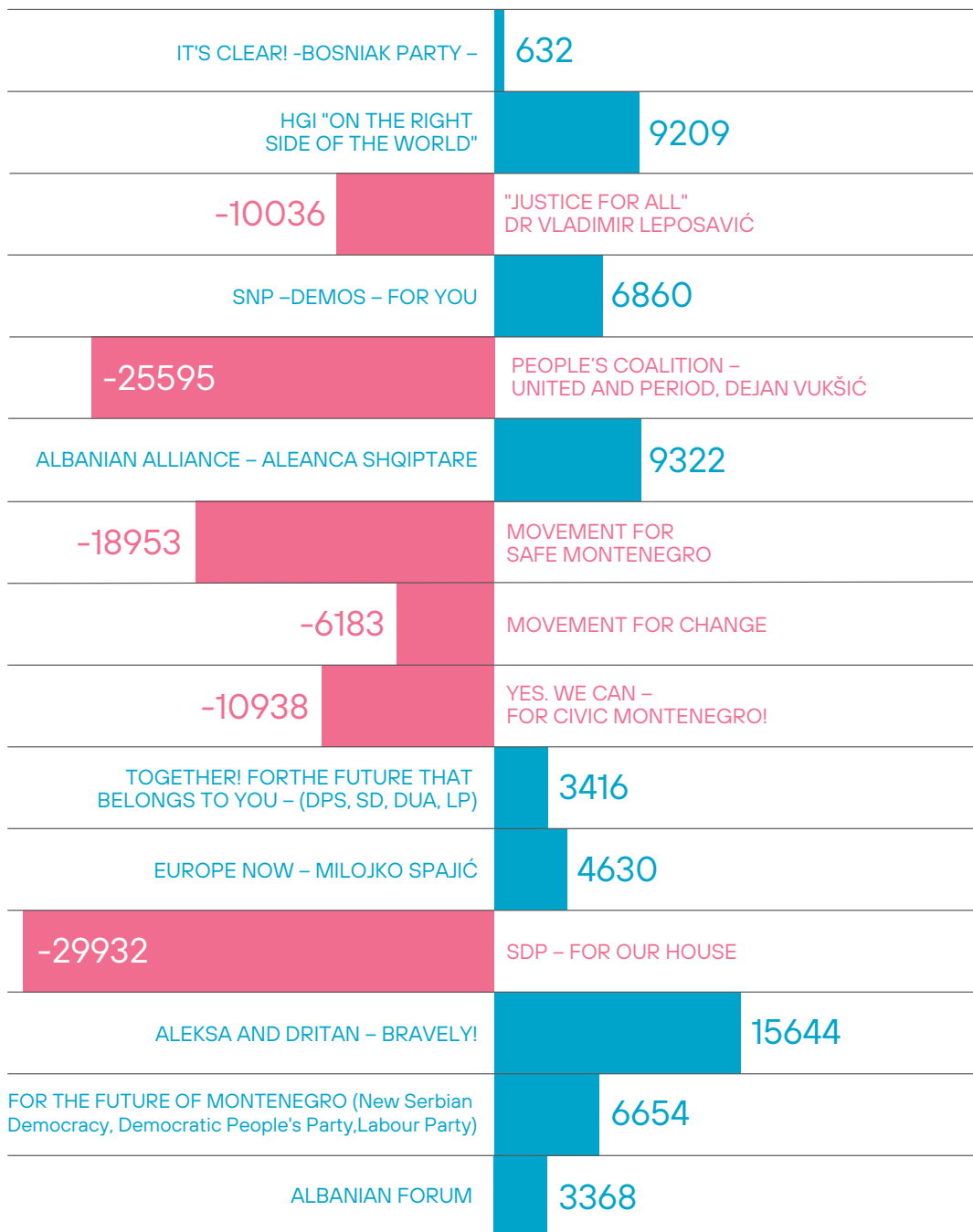
ALEKSA AND DRITAN
BRAVELY!

3%

REVERSAL FOR SAFE MONTENEGRO –
SRĐAN PERIĆ

Graph 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 Time of political propaganda tv clips and reports broadcast on all televisions (expressed in %)

Analysing the total funds invested in advertising candidate lists on television, in print media, on radio stations, through social media, and via billboards, the Bosniak Party (BS) had the lowest cost per parliamentary seat (632 EUR), while the coalition Democratic Front – URA had the highest cost (15,644 EUR).



Graph 20. "Cost" of the parliamentary seat according to candidate lists in relation to the funds invested in advertising (TV, print media, radio, social media, billboards)

Gender equality forgotten on social media

When it comes to the general population, **Montenegro is the leader in the region in internet and social media usage**. According to a report of the DataReportal from January 2023¹⁸ as many as **89.8%** of the population in the country had internet penetration, with 472,700 active social media users (equating to **75.4** percent of population). **The most frequently used platforms are Facebook and Instagram, followed by Twitter and LinkedIn**. It is precisely these platforms that political actors use as a powerful channel for political communication, which comes to the fore during election campaigns.

The influence of social media on the dynamics and outcomes of electoral processes today is an indispensable factor in shaping political public opinion, generating and disseminating various narratives, changing or deepening voter preferences, etc. Practice has shown that political entities use these platforms during election campaigns not only to promote their parties' general messages and positions but also to engage in dirty, negative campaigns against individuals, and especially women in politics have been targets of such attacks and attempts at discrediting and disqualification from political and electoral processes in the past period.

Considering the reasons mentioned above, CCE conducted **social media monitoring** to deconstruct narratives about women in the context of parliamentary elections from the perspective of gender equality, determine patterns in which these narratives are formed but also to examine how candidate lists and their candidates communicated issues related to gender equality and women's rights. Additionally, the goal was to determine the (non)existence of misogyny, gender stereotypes, offensive comments, hate speech directed at women by the general public in social media comments.

For monitoring purposes, **six independent monitors** were engaged to **daily follow the pre-election campaign on social media of 15 candidate lists** in the race for the 2023 parliamentary elections. They collected relevant material and reported on it, while the CCE team analysed the data. The monitoring covered the three most used social media platforms in Montenegro - **Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter**, and the monitoring period was from **11 May to 11 June 2023**. The subjects monitored on each of these social media platforms were:

- Official pages of parties running in parliamentary elections;
- Official pages of electoral coalitions, if applicable;
- Official pages of major entities, as well as all parties functioning within such entities and supported the list;

18 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-montenegro>

- Official pages of party leaders;
- Official pages of list leaders.

Furthermore, the monitoring on these platforms was conducted at two levels: on **posts** (directly or indirectly addressing gender equality issues) and in **comments below the posts** (misogynistic, offensive, stereotypical comments, hate speech, discrimination, etc.).

During the monitoring period, a total of **over 6,600 posts** were analysed, and approximately **120 entities** were monitored on these three social media platforms. Candidate lists and the parties that supported them, along with their candidates and leaders, were most active on **Facebook**, where **over 3,200 posts** generated by nearly **50 entities** were analysed, then on **Instagram**, with **over 2,800 posts** of **40 monitored entities**. Out of the three social platforms, **Twitter** had the least pre-election campaign activity, with only **30 official pages** of electoral actors that were monitored, and which posted over 600 posts during the campaign.

In general, the results of social media monitoring largely match with traditional media monitoring, as indicated by the fact that **only 1% of the content focused on gender equality issues was recorded on these platforms**. This situation is particularly concerning, considering that political parties on social media are not limited in communicating content they consider relevant to their campaign and have almost unlimited space to address important issues unlike traditional media, which are often reserved and do not provide sufficient access, especially to smaller or new political entities.

Such a small percentage of generated content indicates that there were almost **no posts whose primary and fundamental goal was the promotion of gender equality, nor were there posts in which parties dealt deeply with women and related issues, gender equality, women's rights, etc.** On the contrary, women's participation was mostly addressed in a single sentence within posts related to the candidate list, programme, general campaign messages, etc. Furthermore, not only were women's issues not on the list of campaign activities on social media, but women themselves, as actors in the electoral process, were almost invisible, while men took the roles of the campaign's faces. An exception was the movement *We Can*, and there was also somewhat balanced visibility of women and men of *Reversal*, *PzP*, *Demos* and *SNP*. Therefore, in the overall narrative that was created during the pre-election campaign on social media, just as in traditional media, the dominant voice was male, i.e., the views predominantly came from male actors, which can also be attributed to the fact that only one woman was the leader of the candidate list in the parliamentary elections.

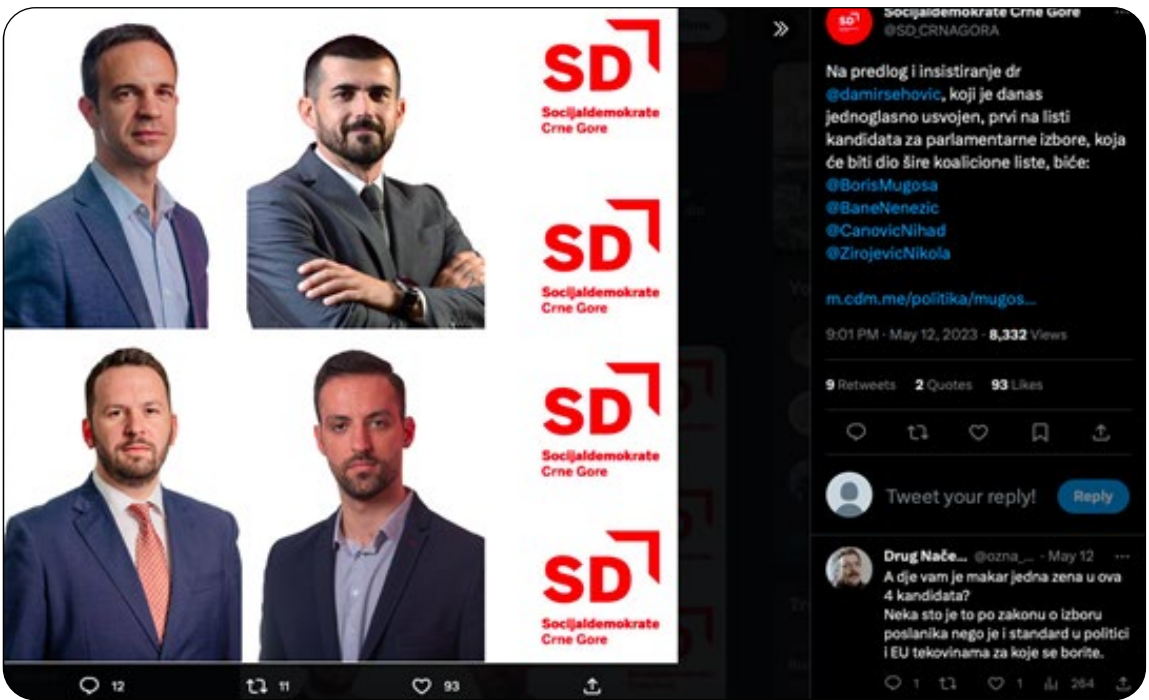
The attention of political actors was mostly paid to **Facebook** and was the main channel for spreading political communication, and entities/pages that communicated the most about gender equality issues on this platform were: ***We Can*, *Boris Mugoša*, *BS*, *SD*, *PzP*, *SNP*, *Forca*, *Nik Đeljošaj*, *DPS*, *Demos*, *CM URA*, etc.** The content of these communications can be classified into several categories: the percentage of women on candidate lists and women in the focus of the electoral programme (*We can*, *BS*, *DPS*, *SD*, *PzP*); encouraging women's participation in politics and public life; economic empowerment of women and the development of female entrepreneurship; greater involvement in the labour market (*We can*, *SD*, *Nik Đeljošaj*, *Boris Mugoša*, *Forca*...); combating gender-based violence, condemnation of verbal violence and hate speech against women (*CM URA*, *BS*, *SNP*...); reactions to a

misogynistic article of "Aktuelno" portal targeting URA's female MPs (Jelušić and Zoronjić / CM URA, BS, SNP); legal protection against dismissal during maternity leave and an increase in maternity leave (SNP); lack of funds for artificial insemination (Boris Mugoša); posts regarding the elections for the leadership of the Women's Forum (BS) and the initiative to establish a Women's Club in the Municipal Council of the Capital City (PzP); organizing roundtable discussions (We Can); support for SD female candidate list representatives (Boris Mugoša), etc.

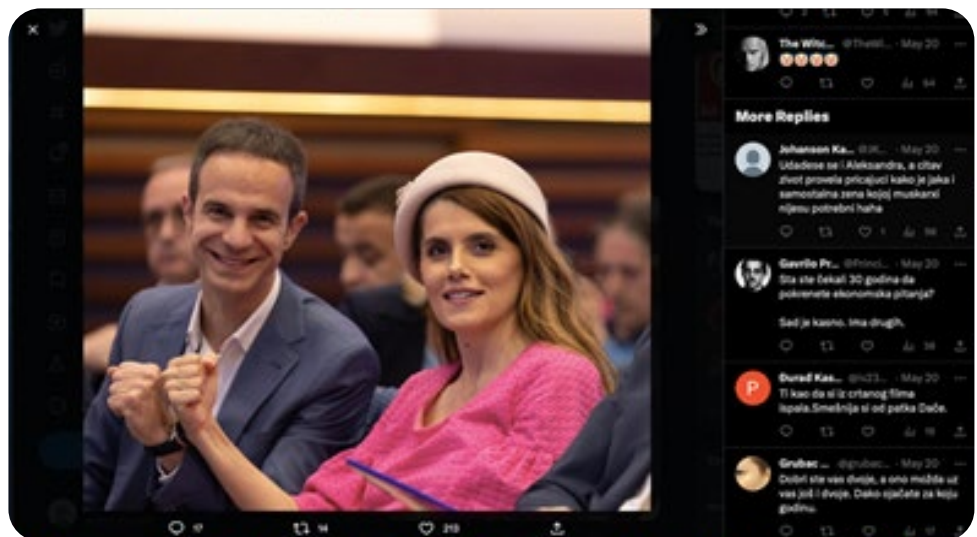
The content of communication on Instagram and Twitter for those entities that had official pages on these platforms completely matched the content generated on Facebook, with some differences in the entities that used these platforms mostly for the purpose of the election campaign. Thus, the most active entities on Instagram were: **We Can, SNP, DPS, SD, CM URA, BS, Albanian Forum, Albanian Alliance, etc.** while the active ones on **Twitter** were **DPS, SD, BS, LP.**

Regarding the second level of content analysis, i.e., the **comments below posts**, in order to determine the (non)existence of **misogyny, insults, stereotypes, discrimination, hate speech, etc. monitoring records a certain progress as there has been a smaller volume of such speech and misogynistic statements compared to previous election cycles.** This can be attributed to the fact that **women generally did not occupy much of the media or political scene, nor the space on social media, that only one woman was the list leader but also that women were not the leading figures in the campaigns.** Thus, the impression of a **lower degree of misogyny** was created, but it was not because of a fundamental change of climate in this domain. However, it is good that there was also a significant number of positive comments below the posts, most often in the form of reactions or appeals for an increase in the number of women on the lists and in political life, which indicates a gradual maturation and an increased level of public understanding of the necessity of affirming women's political participation.

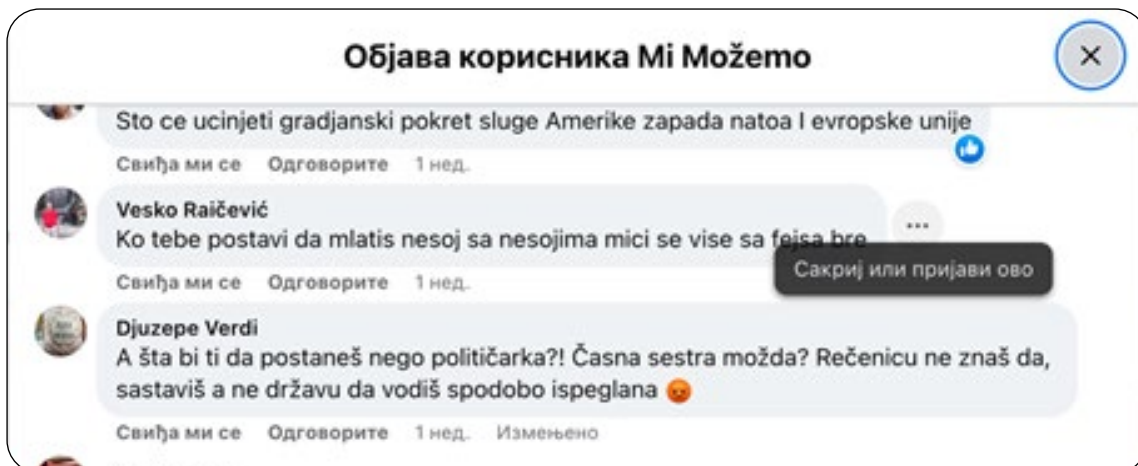
The most frequently targeted women from Montenegrin political scene by the public in comments on social media and, at the same time, the most frequent targets of attacks, criticism, discrimination, misogynistic and stereotypical comments, insults, and hate speech, were: **Dragica Perović Ivanović, Božena Jelušić, Aleksandra Vuković Kuč, Jelena Božović, Anika Bajić, Milena Vuković Sekulović, Olivera Injac, Simonida Kordić, Jelena Nedović, Ana Novaković Đurović, and others.** Also, a large number of cases of **objectification and naturalization of female identity** have been recorded, restricting the role of women to the role as a mother, wife, and other traditionally (re) produced gender roles, calling into question her professional performance and achievements, while at the same time reserving a place for women in the private sphere of patriarchy which only further deepens the imbalance of (political) power in Montenegro. Moreover, personal lives were extensively discussed, comments about physical appearance and clothing style of women etc. were recorded. In the end, the lack of women's presence in the political, public, and media spheres, combined with the particularly negative and stereotypical representation and visibility, create fertile ground and further produce new condemnations, criticisms, insults, examples of hate speech, and discrimination when they are present, which can be depressing and disheartening for women in politics. Here are some examples of hate speech and negative comments directed at women:











Објава корисника Ми Можемо



Samko Muric
Tek bi nas podavili

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 1 нед.



Ljiljana Nakicenovic
Zaostala drzava ,sovinisticki stav,cak i Kosovo je imalo predsjednicu ali u CG se jos isudjavaju..sramota za zemlju koja ima toliko visok procenat obrazovanih zena..50 :50 treba biti norma tad ce se pomjeriti iz mraka..

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 1 нед.



Sabrija Muratovic
Izuzetno lijepo ,da joj se posreci i da predze cenzus!

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 1 нед.



Dragan Vujacic
Dosta nam je bila Prcilica i za narednih 10 godina!

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 1 нед.



Mikely Sekularac
Auuu, VELIKE STETE! KAKO SU DOSAD RADILE POSLANICE U PARLAMENTU,ZENAMA TREBA ZABRANIT DA SE BAVE POLITIKOM. ZNAM SA CE SADA BITI KRITIKE ZA OVO STO SAM NAPISAO,ALI NEKA SE PRESABERU I NEKA KAZU KOLIKO JE XLA DOLAZILO IZ NJIHOVIH USTA. NECU IM POMINJAT IMENA JER SVAKO ZNA NJIHOVO CINJENJE.

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 1 нед.

Објава корисника Ми Можемо



👍😄 119

10 коментара 5 дељења

👍 Свиђа ми се

💬 Коментар

🔗 Подели



Batko Adzic
previše žena na jedno mjesto, ne valja ovo nikako

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 1 нед.

👍 4

Објава корисника Ми Можемо

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 2 д.

↳  Miodrag Rajović је одговорио : 1 одговор



Petar Vukajlov

Vi ne možete u svoju kuću ništa da učinite a kamo li u državi...

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 2 д.



3



Slavisa Joksimovic

Pomamljene žene?! Dabogda vas manite po Gorici vatali!!!

Свиђа ми се Одговорите 2 д.



6

↳  Miodrag Rajović је одговорио - 3 одговора

Gender equality issues and political participation of women through the view of list leaders for the parliamentary elections

CCE team also conducted oral interviews with the leaders of candidate lists in the parliamentary elections during May and June 2023 on issues related to gender equality and women's political participation, as well as media representation and way of reporting on women during the campaign. In total, 11 out of 15 lists responded positively to the CCE team's request for a discussion on this topic, and the goal of the activity was to determine the positions of the leaders of the lists on various aspects of gender equality, but also to encourage the strengthening of gender equality and the affirmation of women's political engagement within their campaign and within their parties/coalitions.



The participation of women on specific candidate lists, the environment for women's political participation within parties/coalitions, the position of gender equality in the original and electoral program of the party/coalition, the level of recognition of the obstacles faced by women who are or want to be part of public life and occupy certain positions, then providing space for women within specific parties to express their views, appear in the media, elect and be elected to certain positions and the like, as well as the reasons for the low representation of women in the political life of Montenegro, with reference to the increasing exposure of women in the space hate speech and misogyny, are some of the questions answered by the male leaders of 10 lists and the female leader of one list.

The leaders of 11 candidate lists with whom CCE conducted interviews are: Adrijan Vuksanović, leader of the list *HGI – On the right side of the world*; **Ervin Ibrahimović,** leader of the list *It is clear! – Bosniak party*; **Vladimir Leposavić,** leader of the list *„Justice for all!“*; **Vladimir Joković,** leader of the list *SNP – DEMOS – For you*; then **Dejan Vukšić,** leader of the list *„People's coalition – united and period“* (Dejan Vukšić – Christian Democratic Movement; Marko Milačić – True Montenegro; Vladislav Dajković – Free Montenegro; Dragica Perović – Democratic Serbian Party; dr Novica Stanić – Movement for Pljevlja); **Genci Nimanbegu,** leader of the list *Albanian alliance – Aleanca shqiptare*; **Srđan Perić,** leader of the list *Reversal for a safe Montenegro*; **Dragica Perović Ivanović,** leader of the list *Yes. We can for Civil Montenegro!*; **Danijel Živković,** leader of the list *Together! For the future that belongs to you (DPS, SD, DUA, LP)*; **Milojko Spajić,** leader of the list *Europe now*; and **Nikola Đurašković,** leader of the list *SDP – For our house*.

On the other hand, the leaders of four out of 15 candidate lists did not show interest in responding positively to the CCE's inquiry: Aleksa and Dritan – We count bravely!; For the future of Montenegro (New Serbian Democracy, Democratic People's Party of Montenegro, Workers' Party); Albanian forum – Nik Gjeloshaj “BESA for European Development” (Forumi shqiptar – Nik Gjeloshaj “BESA për Zhvillim Evropian”); and Movement for change – Montenegro first – Nebojša Medojević – Reforms to save the country.

The following are comprehensive interviews with all the list leaders individually.

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ, list leader of *It is clear! – Bosniak party*

CCE: What is the general attitude/position of your party on issues of gender equality, women's political participation and women's empowerment? How does it manifest itself in the party?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: In our Bosniak Party, the rule of law is high on the agenda, which includes gender equality. We are a party that unreservedly advocates for the EU, and one of the basic democratic values is gender equality. And it seems to me that every year we also mature when it comes to that reality. I am proud that we are one of the parties that shows in the true sense that we are for the affirmation of gender equality. If we go back 10-15-20 years, we have made a huge step forward. I'm not saying it's enough, but when it comes to our party, I remember in 2006 when we were making a parliamentary list and it didn't go well for us in terms of the equality of women and men on the list. Nevertheless, we improved it every next election cycle, so that today we are among the two or three parties with the largest number of women on the list, so we are extremely proud.

But we all have to contribute. We should not stick strictly to the issue of gender equality here. That's life, reality. We should look not at male-female, but at equal rights for all of us. I am proud to say that Bosniak Party took perhaps that trophy when it comes to the prominence of women in the Assembly. We are the only one who has the head of the deputies' club, but what is more important - she justified that position in the true sense. Today, she is not only recognizable in Montenegro, but we received support before the elections, thanks primarily to her and our policy, even from certain representatives of the White House, from the United States of America. This step forward of ours has, therefore, returned many times over.

Before the local elections, we had a meeting in Rožaje with the Women's Forum, where were over 120 of them. When you hear their thoughts and see the potential, then really, every party should fight to include them and not yet put up that barrier. We have two presidents of municipal committees, maybe we will have a third one soon. And it seems to me that women especially feel the moment and see their space in BS, where it is another additional quality for us. There is also a great chance that we will have two women deputies in the Assembly, which I am extremely proud of, and I believe that both will justify that chance. If you take that percentage, it's a high percentage compared to other parties, because it's not a populist story, but we really advocate and go in that direction.

And to conclude, Montenegrin society is maturing. Maybe someone expects that we, as a national party, do not cherish this value. I believe that we must send a strong signal that there are no more obstacles, that is, that we do not create barriers as to whether a woman is for a position or not. I am glad that women have recognized this opportunity and are increasingly coming to our party. So this result is not accidental.

CCE: How do you rate the low representation of women in political life and decision-making positions? What would be the reasons for that?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: As a man who, in the true sense, advocates for gender equality, I will try to answer in that direction. I think that first of all, in the overall environment in Montenegro, from 2006 until today, enormous progress has been achieved when it comes to gender equality. In that environment, we also have a part of the tradition that makes progress not with such a high speed but happening.

Personally, I expect even stronger proactivity from women. It seems to me that, nevertheless, they remained protective, above all in those elementary matters, when it comes to the family, and only then do they give themselves in other matters. That's why I say that women are much more responsible and serious than men, and I think that in the coming period they must be much more proactive to take the position in the country that they deserve.

Therefore, the environment is to blame, and traditionally established supremacy of men in Montenegro. Also, I do not shift the responsibility from the politicians, but I think that the NGO sector has not done enough to stimulate women in the true sense to seize the chance they have in this country. In the end, when you have a quality staff, let the winds blow from all sides, and they will find its own way. We need to talk more and work on educating women's rights. And, of course, so that the NGO sector is not the only one to blame, I think that media houses have done little in the field of affirming women's rights. Look at the front pages, maybe out of the last 100 front pages you have one affirmative story about women. The media must change politics and affirm these values we are talking about.

CCE: You mentioned the importance of the overall social environment for women's empowerment. And what is the atmosphere within Bosniak Party for the political participation of women and are women

given enough space to express their views within your party?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: It depends on which municipal board we are talking about. Of course, there are a lot of women in Rožaje and we have some energy there, but it can also be bigger. Somewhere we have a lot of energy, and somewhere passivity. And there I recognize the space for the upcoming work of the Women's Forum. As you know, we are a member of the European People's Party, within there is also a special committee of the Women's Forum, and I see a chance in those European experiences, which would help us to affirm the work of women even more strongly.

CCE: Are these issues (general issues of gender equality and political participation of women, but also their cultural, social, sexual and reproductive rights, economic empowerment, the fight against violence against women, etc.) now/or have they ever been on the official agenda of your political party? And has the party ever, especially for these parliamentary elections, run a campaign on this issue, has there been an attempt within the party to more strongly publicize and advocate this issue?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: Before these elections, as a serious party, we conducted a survey to see what the citizens were reacting to. Our party's growth is not accidental, because we directed 70% of campaign based on that survey. In these elections, our focus was on the economy, workers' rights, and the rule of law. Of course, I recognize the need to affirm other topics and values in the next period, especially through the work of the Women's Forum and the Youth Forum. I repeat, we are a party that is relatively young on the political scene and we have matured from cycle to cycle. Maybe we could work much more in that field, but in the coming period we certainly will. I, as president, and my colleagues will make a strong contribution when it comes to protecting women's rights. Of course, stop violence and everything that goes against elementary human values.

CCE: CCE's research also shows that in the media, only 2% of the time and space in the current campaign is devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment? Why do you think that is so?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: This information is devastating, but I think that the topics that were imposed even before the election simply prevailed. In addition, several other affairs have totally thrown these issues into the agenda, which I believe will be one of the very important topics of all parties in the next election cycle, if not at the top, especially if we want to be a progressive society. And I think that the citizens told us in which direction we should go.

CCE: In the last few years, hate speech, misogynist, sexist comments and negative campaigns directed towards women in political and public life have been particularly pronounced. Although our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, a certain shift was achieved in that part, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties. However, mostly only women came to the defense of their colleagues. Why is this so and don't men see a problem in it?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: We were guided by the fact that, nevertheless, the voice of women is more important at that moment and we wanted to empower all women through women's solidarity. That was the reason why a woman condemned it here, and not one of the men. We wanted her to send a message of solidarity to all women.

CCE: Is this exactly what deters women from entering politics?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: I think that a part of these women must move strongly, not to sacrifice themselves, but to endure all these blows for the sake of some new, better times, for other women, for our children. I do not

call for martyrdom and sacrifice, and I strongly condemn such attacks and everything that certain colleagues and women in Montenegro went through. On the other hand, I call for them to be even firmer so that all these blows are blunted and in the coming period women take the places that really belong to them, and they belong equally to everyone in our country. I live for the day when we will be able to sit and say that Montenegro provides equal opportunities for both genders.

CCE: *Earlier you spoke about the importance of education in this area. Do you think that we should work more with men within the parties and, to a certain extent, sensitize some of them?*

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: Absolutely, but it also depends on different regions in Montenegro. I will not say that the patriarchy is in force in certain parts of Montenegro, because I am satisfied with how the country is moving forward, but maybe it is not the same way of thinking in my Rožaje or Nikšić, or, say, Podgorica. We must achieve that level of awareness that they think the same when it comes to women's rights, both in my Rožaje and in, for example, Budva. We have a lot of work ahead of us and we must work in that direction.

CCE: *At the moment of compiling the electoral list, did you face any kind of challenges or problems when it comes to the number of women, that is, the representation of women on the list? Do they themselves show a certain type of initiative to find themselves on that list, or is it all an "artificial" process?*

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: I am satisfied with how the process is going, especially in our party. When we proposed the list, we visited all municipal committees and, among other things, talked to representatives of the women's forum. I am especially delighted with two or three municipal committees, as they have expressed their willingness to be high on our list. So I feel that this energy exists, but that it needs to be a little more directed. And it seems to me that it is much easier for women than for men, it seems to me that women are much more responsible. So there were no problems with the list, the women showed their ambitions and I think that maybe they didn't get all the positions they wanted on the list, but that we gave them the chance that they might very soon be MPs. With that, we really sent a message, and that was my goal when I visited the committees, that the party is maturing and that we need the strength of women, but that they should also seize the moment. Among other things, I said that I know that Bosnian women do not have just one Strujić as a lioness, but that they have thousands of such women, but we need to recognize them and give them a chance. It seems to me that this is well accepted by certain municipal committees and that in the coming period we will show through public appearances and through political life that we have many women who can do, if not the same, perhaps a better job than Strujić.

CCE: *If I'm not mistaken, you had 41% women on the list, which means that you are the second list with the largest number of women. On the other hand, we have witnessed that in most cases, women are represented on other electoral lists for parliamentary elections almost to the minimum extent required by law. Why is that so? And do you think that quotas, as a measure of affirmative action, are a certain kind of temporary solution, or do they have the potential to fundamentally change the situation?*

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: I am an advocate of a high level of political culture on our political scene in Montenegro. Allow me not to comment on other parties, I can only talk about our party. I don't like to get involved in the work of other parties, and I would like us to teach each other not to get into each other's yard. We show through our actions that we want women to participate more actively in all spheres of socio-political life. But we must understand that we don't need the law to oblige us, but we need to contribute in the true sense, so if a man deserves a better place on the list, he should be there. But if it is a woman, then she should take that position.

And we have to start living it, not hiding behind laws and norms. For example, in Bijelo Polje, we opened very fast a position for a councilwoman who has shown through her activities that she can handle it. We look for that quality in women, because we say that it is an added value for all parties, not only us. So, we live to the fullest, so that we are not bound by laws and quotas, but by the quality of the proposed candidates, whether male or female. That's why I call once again for women to be as they are, brave, to use their chance, to come to us, to contribute to the better quality of the work of the Bosniak Party, and therefore to affirm all their potentials that they possess.

CCE: You said that sometime since the referendum, you see a certain kind of progress in terms of the representation of women in politics. However, the numbers at this moment indicate that we will not achieve such progress in this parliamentary convocation either, and we will see what the situation will be with the executive power. What are your assumptions?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: I think that from 2020, there is an atypical environment on the political scene in Montenegro, which can be a benchmark for us when it comes to gender equality. So, we have a lady as the president of the Assembly. This is perhaps the best thing that has happened in the last three years. On the other hand, the political scene every year is perhaps the least of the quality we would like. That is why I emphasize, when we return to the story of municipal and local committees, that women should use their voice there and seek their place. I think that the 44th Government will be understanding if the Bosniak Party has a woman in that Government, but the party authorities decide on that, so we'll see.

CCE: When we talk about some leadership positions in society, do you think that positions in some sectors, such as security, defense, etc., are pre-reserved for men? Why are more positions chosen for women in, for example, education, health, etc.? How can we change these unwritten rules and is there a will among the parties and future decision makers for such changes?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: If we make a match, in which quality determines the best, then women will also find their place in it. I have no problem with that. And I know several countries where women lead internal affairs. We also had a Minister of Defence in the 42nd Government. However, I think that the basic reference should be quality. And maybe it seems too slow to us, and maybe it is slow, but these rules will lead to a balance when it comes to gender equality. For me, the benchmark is quality, and what we need to affirm and advocate is that women graduate from the highest quality schools. Nobody runs away from quality. So, I believe that the best recipe is references and a good, fair match. And then you won't be able to see who is in which place - whether it is a woman or a man.

CCE: In your opinion, what are the mechanisms for greater inclusion of women in politics, and for strengthening female leadership in politics, and where do you see the biggest obstacle? Who bears the greatest responsibility here?

ERVIN IBRAHIMOVIĆ: We should accept that men have a big part of the responsibility. However, on the other hand, I expect much greater proactivity from the women themselves. I think that's the key to everything. Greater proactivity from where they live, from their workplace, and so on. As the president of the party, and certainly all my colleagues in other parties, when they come across quality, they don't have the luxury of giving it up. Women should start pushing for the best among themselves, and there is no president or party that would be able to say, to that strong message of women, that they should not cover a certain position. I invite all women to come forward with their wisdom, determination, courage, and intelligence and to get better involved in the socio-political spheres of life.

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ, list leader of HGI – On the right side of the world

CCE: Does your political party recognize the importance of issues of gender equality, women's political participation and women's empowerment? If so, how does it manifest itself in the party?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: I am free to say that it recognizes, and we have plenty of arguments for such a thing. In the current leadership of the Croatian Civic Initiative, we have a significant number of women in the Presidency and in the Central Committee, as the highest body of the party between the two Parliaments, that is, Congresses, as well as the female president of the municipal committee of HGI in Kotor. Previously, we had a female party president and a female member of Parliament. Therefore, HGI has always affirmed women in politics because we recognized it as a value. On the other hand, in this way, we wanted to present women to the public as someone who and how can contribute to society and every other aspect of life in Montenegro.

CCE: How would you rate the low representation of women in political life and decision-making positions? What are the reasons for that?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: There are several reasons. We are a society that does not stimulate the social engagement of women. Unfortunately, we also heard in the Assembly of Montenegro that women should reduce their jobs to those that are domestic, familiar. I think it's about the fact that there are those who are afraid of strong women. Therefore, this social label is not suitable for women's activities and for their contribution in politics. But I also think that all those who manage to break through and express themselves on the political scene, in just such an environment, represent extremely high-quality women who are valuable for our political and social scene. I have been convinced many times that the way of thinking of women can contribute to the achievement of results and to everything that is important for the mission of a party.

CCE: Would that mean that more women in decision-making positions and more women who would be a certain role model for others could encourage those women who are afraid of public speaking to speak publicly and engage politically. Is that one of the solutions?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: You know that we live in an environment of tensions in which politics often generates these tensions. I believe a female approach would, to a good extent, contribute to calming these tensions, but conditions must be created so that women can express their thoughts and make decisions. I'm not one of those who think that women make *a priori* the right decisions, but I think that in many ways they act more creatively, with less tension, which is good for society. That is why they should be provided with all the conditions for political expression, and they should be encouraged to fight for such a status themselves.

CCE: Are women demotivated or afraid to speak publicly and be the target of condemnations, negative comments and negative campaigns in the current socio-political situation? What have you done, within the party, and now as a list leader, to motivate/inspire/encourage women to get more involved and speak out publicly ?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: In general, it is not easy to be a woman in Montenegrin politics. While you are asking me that question, I am thinking about the many women who in the political field and in that kind of complete exposure also experienced some sexist attacks, primitive contents that they had to endure, ... And that is what is generally bad. Another bad thing is that there is no adequate public condemnation for it, and then such disrespectful speech towards women is perceived by some actors as affirmative. This speaks about the state of our society and the state of our politics. I am pleased that HGI is entering the political market in Montenegro

with its culture of dialogue and in that way wants to impose itself on its voters. And that we are like what I am talking about, is also evidenced by our list for the parliamentary elections. There are 40.9% women on the HGI list. In front of us is only the group of voters WE CAN, and we are second in line, which I am very happy about. If we also consider the fact that we are a minority party, and that to some extent by that logic we would have a problem with male members who want to be active in politics, we managed to take an extraordinary second place. In my opinion, this is a fact to be respected, and we will continue to affirm HGI's policy in this regard.

CCE: *In the last few years, hate speech, misogynist, sexist comments and negative campaigns directed towards women in political and public life have been particularly pronounced. Although our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, a certain shift was achieved in that part, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties. However, almost only women came to the defense of their colleagues. Why is this so and don't men see a problem in it?*

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: It is bad that in the forest of all kinds of events in Montenegro, sometimes we and our public get lost, which is showered daily with various conglomerates of media content, loses sight of what is important, so it has no social resonance. But, if there is no social resonance, there must be a clear institutional response to such occurrences. I must say that HGI has often stood up in defence of women. Now it occurs to me that when the former Minister of Health, Mrs. Jelena Borovinić Bojović, was exposed to such attacks, we, even though we belong to different political structures and are on opposite ideological positions, clearly came forward and condemned such a thing. And this is how we will behave in the future because we want to be consistent and indiscriminate in such phenomena that disrupt what is called a healthy society.

CCE: *CCE's research also shows that in the media, only 2% of the time and space in the current campaign is devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Why is that so? Are these questions irrelevant, or are some others more relevant and bring more political points, or is there some other reason?*

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: We are a society that is burdened with the so-called big topics, and it is obvious that we are deeply divided. In that clash of different ideas and views on what should be the perspective of Montenegro, that female voice is lost somewhere. But, from the point of view of women, I would also see it as a chance. The very environment I was talking about - dislike for women - can be a chance for them to stand out. As in life, so in politics. Every crisis situation is also an opportunity to come out of it better and stronger. She is constructive. You don't grow in comfort, you grow in a challenge, so I would encourage women to accept it as a challenge. On the other hand, we can clearly see that certain women politicians are also very popular. That's why I wouldn't be pessimistic, on the contrary. We are aware of all the problems that burden us, but with persistent work, loyalty to these principles, we will contribute to making it better.

CCE: *Are these issues (general issues of gender equality and political participation of women, but also their cultural, social, sexual and reproductive rights, economic empowerment, the fight against violence against women, etc.) now/or have they ever been on the official agenda of your political parties? And has the party ever, especially for these parliamentary elections, run a campaign on this issue, that is, has there been an attempt within the party to more strongly publicly problematizes and advocates this issue?*

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: We did not emphasize these issues in the campaign, but again I, as the leader of the list and as a representative of the party, am very satisfied with the large number of activities generated by

women, that is, the female part of our party, and I can freely say that they carried this campaign. We are now entering the final stage, but I am glad that, in this time of some crises, young women appeared who contributed to the affirmation of HGI with their activities, and I can freely say, in some crisis and sensitive situations, they stood in the front lines. Now I will not burden the public, but it is known from the media that in this campaign we had some incidents that disturbed our public, and women were the ones who stood up first to defend the policies of the HGI.

CCE: Does this mean that you believe that the environment for the political participation of women within your party is encouraging and that women within HGI are given enough space to express their views?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: I think so. We have never treated female politicians from HGI with any form of disrespect. On the contrary, we see in them, as in all other structures or segments of HGI, a great potential that we want to affirm.

CCE: What strength does the HGI Women's Forum have, to what extent is it an active factor?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: The Women's Forum is active and is led by Professor Dijana Milošević, a versatile person, a professor of mathematics, who also leads a theatre group within our national community, and who is politically recognized. She is one of the true examples of the activities of women within our party.

CCE: Does your party organize any trainings, leadership trainings and seminars or otherwise educate its members about gender equality and related issues?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to carry out these activities because we have been out of the Assembly for almost three years, which means that we are in a difficult situation. We are focused on these elections to regain parliamentary status and enter into what is called regular political life, but that is certainly our intention. As it is our intention, let me make a digression, to devote some attention to the education of our young people. We will do the same with the Women's Forum. They had activities in the sense of visiting certain sights, cities, establishing relations with similar organizations within the framework of other parties, etc. But what is important to me as the president of the party is that HGI has, if we look at the percentages, an enviable number of women who they can respond to certain challenges at any time. We have established women who are recognized in society, such as, for example, Professor Dijana Milošević, then Blanka Radošević Marović, who was director of the directorate in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, etc. They actively participate in the campaign, go to TV guest appearances are exposed in the media and this is something that is valuable to us. After all, if it wasn't so, there wouldn't be such a percentage of women on the list.

CCE: How can men within parties contribute to the political empowerment of women and what actions should they take to increase the level of political participation of this part of the population?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: Weak men are afraid of strong women. But weak men are also afraid of strong men. However, a special blow to the ego is a strong woman for a weak man. I believe that it is necessary to create an environment that will be stimulating for growth and creativity, and such an environment is created by people who are themselves such, creative, stimulating, who do not measure themselves with others but with themselves, and compare themselves with what they were once and what are they now in fact, we are entering a field of spirit and response that we must all give for ourselves. It's like when you run. It is always better to do it with someone who is in better condition than you, because that way you will also achieve more and better

than to indulge your ego with someone who is weaker than you and who is far behind you. This is the only way we can grow. Only in that environment, and it is called healthy competition, and it is a form of healthy rivalry.

CCE: When we talk in general about the political life of Montenegro and about decision-making positions, do you think that positions in some sectors, such as safety, defence, etc., are reserved in advance for men? So far, have men's jobs been dominant here? If so, how is it changing?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: Well, obviously they are. This is caused by our consciousness, those functions that are perceived as male and belong to men again. I don't think it's *a priori* good, just as I don't think it's good for it to be a woman *a priori*. I don't favour either. I just want us to have an environment of equality and for the starting position to be equal for everyone. I also understand some other social circumstances, familiar, etc. So that someone starts 10 meters ahead in a race, and someone 20 meters behind. What we should strive for is that the starting position is equal for everyone. Somewhere those ministries that have something militant in them, like the army or the police, are perceived as male functions. However, this does not mean that men will do it better than some lady who is professional, educated, and has the appropriate habitus to perform the functions we are talking about in the best way. I think that a woman has an exceptional opportunity if she shows her potential, intellectuality, courage - she will surely be at an advantage, before some male rival with whom she is fighting for a certain position or competing in an election race.

CCE: In your opinion, what are the mechanisms for greater inclusion of women in politics, and for strengthening female leadership in politics? And what do you see as the biggest obstacle?

ADRIJAN VUKSANOVIĆ: Even in the current mandate in the Assembly, you have a Women's Club. I was not in the Assembly during this mandate, but I saw from the media and from conversations with female deputies that it worked very well, that women's solidarity was developing in this way. That's good, because they all belong to different subjects, ideologies, positions, and yet they gathered around that common denominator - female activism in politics. It is a good vision, through which you can express everything that is important for the affirmation of women in politics.

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ, list leader of „Justice for all! “

CCE: Does your candidate list recognize the importance of issues of gender equality, women's political participation and women's empowerment? If so, how does it manifest itself?

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ: We did not specifically talk about women's rights, and that may be a mistake, because we consider it normal, natural, and binding that equality is not questioned, especially the equality of the two oldest identities of the human species - men and women. We tried to make our contribution by engaging women in politics, in our movement, starting with writing a program in which women actively participated. In a smaller team, women were equalized with men numerically, even though on our list there are about 30% women. Besides that, we had a woman not in fourth, but in third place. And that's because we felt that a person of her personal experience, significance, sacrifice, political weight, was more worthy of being there than some men. So, we had a woman before men who may be older, with a higher level of education, but not because we wanted the woman to get an artificial advantage in that way, but because she is a hard-working woman. Our principle is that women need protection, not because they are the weaker sex, but because they are just as valuable as men, and both are human beings. We do not want a paternalistic approach where women are given anything, because women do not need to be given anything, they are equally valuable human beings. As someone who is traditional, I think that in certain aspects of life and work, women are both more valuable and

stronger, just as in other aspects of work or life the stronger sex are men, in terms of physical strength, while for women we talk about motherhood, about talents, etc.

We are the only ones in the position of the political centre, all other parties are on the extreme left and right, and occasionally run over. The balance of our approach politically and legally just shows equality. Justice for all. What does equality mean and what does justice mean? It means that equals should be treated equally, and unequal differently. Because it is injustice when you treat unequal people in the same way. Therefore, persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities cannot have the same access and cannot have the same expectations from them. A man and a woman cannot have completely identical rights, we cannot deny a woman the rights that she has by nature of her identity, biological first, and then also this sociological gender identity. It is even unnecessary to emphasize that we are for the equality of men and women, which does not mean that we should not fight for it and that we should not mention it, especially in the context of violence that women suffer due to some traditional and bad stereotypes.

The tradition starts from “*tradere*”, which means to transfer. Tradition is the good that is transmitted, while the bad should not be transmitted, and it is not tradition. Therefore, an extreme patriarchal society in which women do not have the right to vote is not a tradition for me, because it does not meet the transferability criterion. In the past, we have a difficult but also significant role for women, but the historical position of women has changed legally and politically.

When we chose people for the list and when we discussed about the positions, we did not pay attention to whether it was a man or a woman, and we never chose women because of the number. I am glad that there is a legal obligation that a certain number of candidates for MPs should be women.

I think it's good that recently women have simply come to terms with their rights, they are less and less afraid of public condemnation or anything, at least what I see, which is that they participate equally in politics and engage in public life. Of course, some things need to be corrected, for us the most important thing is the fight against violence against women, for the equality of women and men in terms of earnings. It is inadmissible for women to be paid less than men for jobs with the same professional qualification. That is crime and hypocrisy and falseness and sin both in the legal and spiritual sense. These things are very important - the fight against violence, the equal rights of women in terms of their ability to participate in political life and the right to earn the same as men. Of course, if there are already biological differences and certain predispositions between men and women, they will be replaced by different jobs, but in those jobs where they can be equally successful, and such jobs are 90% today, it is inadmissible for such differences to exist.

Furthermore, women's rights must be especially protected in those areas where women are exposed to abuse because of their role and, above all, motherhood. We are very interested, and we talked about this right in our program, maternity leave, protection of women from dismissal and from being conditioned by entering into a fixed-term employment contract in relation to pregnancy. A woman cannot be asked if she plans to have a pregnancy. As part of her right, the right to give birth and not to give birth. Any right that implies doing something also implies not doing it. The right to work also implies the right to sit at home and not work, because otherwise we would have slavery.

We, as a human species, owe our existence to women, at least on a biological level. We need to be very sensitive to this role of motherhood, both legally and lawfully. And according to all those abuses that have to do with it. I think it is important to start from that - that protection is not given to them, but that they deserve protection and that the natural rights of people - both women and men - are basic human rights that belong to them by birth, by the fact that they are human beings. So not as the weaker sex, I personally don't use that in my vocabulary,

it seems to me that I never have, which is not only unintelligent, but also offensive. On the other hand, I think that our legal system constantly needs to be harmonized, and there is a role for women's organizations.

CCE: Are you referring to women's NGOs and those dealing with these and related issues, or to women's forums within political parties?

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ: I mean both. When there is a women's forum in the party, it means that women are not already equal in that party, so they must have a forum. As a minority. In order to be a minority, you have to be numerically, and therefore endangered, so you get special rights. I support that with women's forums in general, I understand the point, but we have no need to have a women's forum, because half of our members at meetings are women. Or maybe a third, it depends at what moment. They are also equal members, and we talk as people, as citizens who share the same political and moral beliefs, and not as men and women, this difference is completely non-existent. Unless this difference needs to be codified for something positive, for some status. Women's forums in parties are a product of the neglect of women and their rights, so the women's forum makes up for it. But if they are equal in that party, then there shouldn't be any, because then we could also have a forum for redheads, young people up to 21 years old, a forum for those who have some height to some extend... We don't have a women's forum because we think that it is not right, it reminds us of those institutes for minorities that are threatened numerically, maybe under pressure to abandon their identity, so they are given special rights to preserve it.

CCE: Maybe women are not a minority in society, but women in the Parliament are still a minority, and that figure is not even close to fulfilling even the minimum quota of 30%?

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ: The number of women in politics is changing. However, freedom of choice is very important. For me as a human being, and as a lawyer and recently a politician, it is important that a woman has the same opportunities and rights as a man, to participate. We are a party of the centre and I personally am a political liberal, or even a libertarian, freedom of personal determination is important to me, I consider it a central category of personal and political life. That is, freedom of personal determination and personal freedom whose limits are only equal to the freedom of others. This was defined by the ancient Romans. However, if you start from those negative aspects of politics - that politics is a dirty activity, where punches are given and received below the belt, where dishonourable actions are normal - then women choose not to participate in politics, perhaps precisely because of their views, aesthetic, moral and other. My view of the world of men and women starts from the reason that they are *in favour* of women. But you also have other activities in which you do not have equality. Politics carries this indication of power. Of course, government bodies, institutions, private business, corporations are important. It starts from the fact that politics or the Parliament is the place where political power is created, so the legitimate question is why there are not enough women there. But you know that power is not created openly in the Parliament, but in the media, among the sponsors, and the corporations that stand behind them. It is legitimate for women and women's organizations to constantly examine why the number of women is not greater, but in a way that respects the decision of other women and leaves a space for the possibility that in a certain number of cases the lower presence of women is partly a consequence of their will and decision. I know many men and women who do not want to be involved in politics. They choose a life that is more pleasant, a job that is less stressful. I don't think I have met such a person in my environment, nor have I ever heard the argument that a person should not be involved in politics because she is a woman.

CCE: You previously mentioned the fear of public condemnation that exists among women and exposure to the "dirt" of politics, as you stated, but what else would be the reasons for the low representation of women in political life and in decision-making positions?

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ: Maybe it's all related to motherhood. I tend to believe in one socio-biological approach, which is a discipline that tries to explain all social phenomena based on natural laws. And then, from a socio-biological point of view, many of our social behaviours are choices that are conditioned by our biological characteristics. Whether they are congenital or acquired, predispositions, biological characteristics, exposure to wind, summer, winter, heat, etc. Even those acquired, diseases, disabilities, etc. In this case, the biological difference between men and women is evident, primarily due to the function of birth, motherhood. It is not unknown in science that women have a greater sensitivity for the safety of themselves and their bodies. And when I say bodies, I mean both the mental and physical state, and it's possible that this sensibility for not exposing yourself to something comes from there. Of course, that's only part of the reason.

I think it is always best for women and their representatives, both in non-governmental organizations and in parties, that they work at every level, because every woman represents all women when she works and lives and fights for her beliefs in any place. You don't have to be a member of an organization to advocate for women's rights. If you protest in a store because of treatment, because of discrimination or anywhere as a woman, you have probably defended your fellow citizens in countless future cases. Anyone who wins a lawsuit and a dispute, who reports violence, teaches the state body that it is starting to be done. Rights belong to the one who uses them, otherwise they are a dead letter on paper.

So, I think that men should leave their decisions to women, to support them in that, but without a paternalistic approach where men get together and allow women special rights. The initiative should come from women's organizations, from women themselves, and then it is the most natural and best. I am in favour of greater participation of women, however, we cannot organize society mathematically - so that in every body, at every moment, we have the exact number of representatives of national minorities, or of all members of political representatives. That is impossible, life is faster than law. The law is always running for life, to regulate some things, and as long as these laws do not limit the freedom of both women and men, then they are good solutions. In order to improve the position of women, it is necessary to eliminate all those social barriers that choose stereotypes. Let's say, that famous giving of alimony where it is suggested that something is given to someone as if it were a gift. And it is not a gift at all, but an obligation, due to the joint obligation of guardianship, and failure to provide alimony is a criminal offense and a serious social deviation. And when it comes to gender equality on the linguistic level, wherever that legislation can be changed and gender equality both on the linguistic and substantive level in all areas of life is greater, we as a movement support that. We have no reservations about this and we are of the opinion that women, individually and organized, give the best impulse and signal which rights are threatened and which rights need to be improved.

CCE: *You said that these changes should come from women themselves, women's organizations, etc. But do you think that part of these signals should also come from men? Do they need to be included more, strengthened, educated, sensitized so that they can be comrades of women in their struggle?*

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ: Based on what is free will and determination, I think men should be included. It takes two to tango, so political stability requires a coalition for cooperation. Sports require entire teams to come together and cross paths and work together. We have that famous saying that "man is not an island", so we need each other, man is a community being - both men and women. It would be illusory to think that women would lead their struggle alone or in isolation. This is called culture under glass, as a negative phenomenon when certain communities exercise their rights, or their identities, but live separately for themselves. The point is that through interaction with others, their identity is realized. And only when the rights are protected, in this case the rights of women, then they can freely decide in what capacity and in what number, in their life, to engage in anything.

The essence of human rights boils down to the fact that it is necessary for us to understand that people who are different from us are equally valuable, that is, that this diversity is understood, that there is no fear of homophobia, a person who is new to the community in any way, be it a woman in a male society. The establishment of human rights in society exists when no one has a problem with the other and the different.

So, the essence is the freedom of choice on diversity, I think that it is coming to life in Montenegro, and quite seriously and in a positive sense, but it needs to be further strengthened. Men should definitely be included, everyone who will it, who wants it, I think most of them are interested, but the initiative always lies with women, that is, those who want some change. In this case, men should be supportive, they have an obligation as state bodies, as officials, but also on a private level, men should support their fellow citizens in the fight for their rights. However, it is important that the initiative comes from women, because if it came from men, then it would be a confirmation of that paternalistic approach where men free women from those restraints. There is no need, women liberate themselves, if they have something to liberate themselves off, i.e., realize their rights that they have not yet achieved, they will achieve new ones because it belongs to them, and in men they need to have allies, that's how things naturally go and this has been shown by social movements of all kinds.

When it comes to the fight against discrimination, the group that felt discrimination was the initiator and the members of that group received support. And the greater that support was, it meant that the action was successful, and that society was changing. Apartheid changed when support for African Americans arrived from the so-called white Europeans. Workers' rights were initiated by workers, and the rights of the bourgeoisie and citizens by members of the third estate. The same applies to sexual minorities. That's the best way. So, that's why it's important to affirm the free will and access of all, the right to choose, and when men get involved in this way, I think it's the most effective, along with, of course, a constant dialogue between men and women where they look for legal solutions together.

Today, you have cases where men's rights are also mentioned, due to the rapid legal development of society. There was almost an interesting legal case, the trial of a lawsuit against and by Johnny Depp. We have seen the violence of women against men and abuse of stereotypical versions according to which women are the weaker sex, etc.

You also have those famous cases of microaggression, where they try to protect women's rights and then, due to some abuses, men can also suffer stigma because of some of their behaviour that was not wrong.

There is often talk about the abuse that occurs when accusations of sexual harassment are made, noting that any harassment should be sanctioned. But the abuse of that right in terms of false accusations should also be sanctioned. There are scientifically proven so-called automated behaviours, discriminations that happen unconsciously, negligently, where groups discriminate without knowing that it is bad, that is, that it offends other members of the group. That's why I think dialogue is important. And that is why it is important to have both men and women in all seminars, in all schools, in all debates. There are many problems, many cases of discrimination in politics as well, and you choose the priority ones first, the most pressing ones, so when you solve them, you move on.

CCE: In the last few years, hate speech, misogynist, sexist comments and negative campaigns directed towards women in political and public life have been particularly pronounced. Although our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, a certain shift was achieved in that part, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties. However, almost only women came to the defence of their colleagues. Why is this so and don't men see a problem in it?

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ: I think that is a big minus, and I will partly accept it on myself. In particular, that portal is a representative of the previous government - DPS regime, a defender of those values who presented himself for years as a benchmark of modernity. Everyone in Montenegro knows that DPS and all its media have attached to themselves the modernity of European and Euro-Atlantic integration for a long time. Now we have the case that when the regime is out of power, its media and editors behave this way. Very bad, very bad. I'm sorry that I didn't manage to register it earlier, so that we can react at that moment. Of course, I agree with the condemnations, especially targeting women like that... If there were two men and three women and they were spoken of as a political group, then it would be somewhat understandable, even though it is hate speech, but it is not gender-oriented but politically motivated. This is how the article is both politically motivated and showed cultural immaturity. For example, I don't have to agree politically with, say, Mrs. Jelušić, but I don't think that gender plays any role in that. She is also engaged in women's activism in the Assembly. I know that it was necessary for the Ministry of Justice, when I was a minister, to delegate women who were supposed to participate in women's forums in the Assembly, in some specific convocations. I think that, for politically motivated reasons, a cultural backwardness and inadmissibility surfaced, jurisdictionally and legally, not only morally. Stigmatizing women just because they are women.

When you enter the campaign, into politics, you see less things than when you are outside, because you focus on the activities, you have that *press clipping* and you follow the attacks on you, and you focus on defending your positions. While I watched politics from the side-lines, when I had much more time, I used to read newspaper articles and texts, and when you start to deal with it professionally, you are focused on presenting your offer as best as possible and you don't have the power to see from the side-lines, that you see the forest from a tree. For this reason, I did not see that text and that case at the time. I'm glad it didn't become so big, scandalous, but it's certainly reprehensible.

A hidden comment is a space of individual hatred, not everyone in society is equally smart or healthy. For me, it is a matter of mental health, such a degree of misunderstanding, and evil intentions. Because we are not talking about the equality of men and women as something about which one can have an opinion. So, there are a thousand debates and problems, but almost nowhere you can hear that someone is asking for someone to be stigmatized. Even if he wants to, he must not say it, because the consciousness has matured. And then when you have someone who behaves and stigmatizes that group, because he does not belong to that group, then he shows not only bad intentions, but also that he is not mentally capable of actively engaging in his community. Maybe this sounds a little harsh, but I'm speaking honestly. Just as in the natural sciences there is penicillin and laws that calculate how to build bridges, so in the social sciences it has come to know that all people are equal and that they should be.

These people, besides that it is necessary to be sanctioned for such behaviour, need constant teaching. I think that we have crossed that red line, and issues of human rights and freedoms can no longer return to the stage where groups are persecuted because they are of a different skin colour, affiliation, or gender. The only question is at what speed we will move forward, but these are already individual incidents, which should be condemned, but I don't think society should worry about them. They are met with moral condemnation and perhaps the citizens ignored it to such an extent that it was not even heard of again, because they consider it perhaps degenerate to comment on.

We have come to such a situation where equality and equitability of people are a normal thing. That is the premise of human life - we are all equal or should be equal in our rights, equal before the law, equally valued and valued as human beings, and then that means a set of different things. And equally paid for the same jobs and equally called for the same titles, and equally treated in terms of position in society, and equally

participating in the management bodies and so on, all that your organization deals with. But the premise is that people are equal and that they cannot be branded because of their affiliation and that they are equal as human beings. This revolution began with Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, after the Second World War, and it was codified by conventions on the protection of human rights. So, if someone doesn't understand that, that someone is hundreds of years behind, but that doesn't excuse him, violence against women, hate speech should be prevented, because it generates violence, justifies it.

I am trying to represent the idea that punishments and sanctions should not be resorted to out of revenge, and punishments as such, but to prevent other cases through the general prevention of punishment and to compensate for the damage, that is, to convey the message as a society that some things are not permissible by establishing responsibility that they are done because they harm people and are dangerous for society. Hate speech is dangerous and I hope it will not happen again. I am sorry that our party, which has the most lawyers on the list, failed to condemn it personally. However, I hope that there will be no more opportunities for this, and if there is, I think that it should be condemned once and for all and the editors criminally sanctioned. The police should do their job, and if they are overcrowded, there are always priorities, murders, traffic safety, and these things are often neglected.

CCE: CCE's research also shows that only 2% of the time and space in the media during the campaign is dedicated to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment? Why is that so? We also have your movement, which is new, and for which you say that for you these are implicit issues that do not need to be emphasized. On the other hand, entities which are much larger than you, and with significantly longer political experience and activity, do not communicate these issues. Why?

VLADIMIR LEPOSAVIĆ: I classify myself in the group of those who consider it self-evident and we behave in accordance with what we believe, so we don't talk about it in particular. Just as a man walks down the street and doesn't wear a "I'm a man" or "I'm a Serb/Montenegrin" shirt, although there are such cases, he has his identity together with all the others and expresses it when necessary. For me personally, this is the reason, for others there is probably also the patriarchal, or stereotypical, so-called macho approach to politics and life, where it is considered justified not to talk about women and their rights in particular, or not to address women as such.

There is probably a reason that in society, with all the appreciation and legitimacy of the problem, there are other urgent topics that are partly artificial, but when psychologically complex structures, stresses and frustrations are created, even if they are caused by something artificial, they must be treated. Such as our inter-ethnic relations.

DPS captured this society, for many years it imposed the theme of saving the state and then we all dealt with saving the state, and the state was collapsing on many levels because its society was collapsing due to violence and discrimination against women, minorities, whether sexual or national, bad economy, etc.

We as a society, in general, are still maturing politically and women and women's rights are suffering because of it. I want to believe that the biggest part of the reason is that, nevertheless, of all the discriminations that exist systemically, discrimination against women is perhaps, if not the least, then the least dangerous. Or women, due to their numerical presence and strength, as a population, are perhaps the strongest of all other discriminated groups, so they are also the most effective in the fight and deal with these individual cases. I want to believe that it is so, because I would like if at least one of the problems we are talking about, the problem of discrimination, is close to a solution.

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ, list leader of SNP – DEMOS – FOR YOU!

CCE: Does your political party recognize the importance of issues of gender equality, women's political participation and women's empowerment? If so, how does it manifest itself in the movement?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: SNP has long been the party that recognizes this the most in Montenegro, and which in its documents, at congresses and in its Statute has provisions on the representation of women, and we also have a Women's Association. SNP is the only party in Montenegro whose Statute defines that at least every third woman can be a member of parliament. Not as it is in the law – that a woman must take every fourth place, because we improved that. And in the current convocation of the Assembly, out of five of our deputies, two were members of the fairer sex, and SNP, like no other party, affirmed that the most. We have both the Women's Association and the Youth Association, and of course every third woman in the Youth Association must be in the structure. In our Statute, we also have a provision that every third member of the younger generation, i.e., younger than 35, must be on the list of deputies. So, SNP takes care of that and basically every third place is guaranteed for the fairer sex.

CCE: How do you rate the low representation of women in political life and in decision-making positions?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: Honestly, I think the bigger problem is with the female members themselves, who are not that active or don't have that much desire to be part of some political structures, parties or other elements of the state government. It is more a problem of the lack of women who want to get involved than that some parties are forcing members of the male gender. Women should be more active. There is a traditional heritage in Montenegro. Girls and women grow up in such an environment, and then the opinion is not formed that they are the ones who would be successful and capable, and even better at performing state functions or participating in the Assembly, even incomparably better than men. If you asked me, for reasons of prudence and attitude towards family, state, and responsibility, I would say that women should be the majority in all state institutions. When you take the percentage of women who are in the executive power and in the Parliament, and when you look at the affairs that are happening, especially those regarding crime and corruption, women are absolutely excluded. And this is another significant reason that indicates that we in SNP should always encourage our young party members and sympathizers to get more actively involved and be part of that story. It's good for them, it's good for the party, and it's good for the country.

CCE: Research shows that women are more trusted when it comes to areas such as education, health, upbringing, social policies, while men have “reserved” places in areas such as national security, defence, police, etc. Do you think that something should be done in that direction as well, and free up the space for professional and qualified women for these positions in order to destroy such stereotypes?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: Of course, it is equalized in Europe. In developed and civilized democracies, there has been complete equalization. In the last thirty years, we have had two exceptional leaders, two powerful states, Margaret Thatcher, in Great Britain, and Angela Merkel, in Germany, who was in charge, and at one point was the only real leader who pulled the entire EU forward.

There are a plenty of other examples, from other countries, and I most sincerely think that women should be given a greater chance, and here I use the opportunity to invite them to get more actively involved. I repeat, due to our patriarchal, historical legacy, I have the feeling that women do not enter politics with such zeal and desire as men do. However, I believe that soon there will be changes and perhaps by the introduction of some new legal solutions, although there are also good current solutions. So, if a woman were to leave the Assembly,

and she was, for example, in seventh place, she cannot be replaced by a man who is in eighth place, but by the next woman. And if a man leaves the Assembly and is replaced by a woman, after that she cannot be replaced by a man, but again by a woman. So, responsibility is shown somewhere here, but the key is that we break it down in the minds of an average citizen - that it is an equal job and occupation or commitment between one and the other gender. When we understand that, then it will not matter who is on a list, who will be the president of the party, the State, the Assembly, the Government, etc.

Until now, in Montenegrin history, we have not had a woman as the president of the country, nor have we had a female president of the government. We had a president of the Assembly, or more precisely, two presidents of the Assembly, and one is from SNP. This is our contribution to understanding how state power should function when it comes to gender equality.

CCE: *When we talk about the lack of enthusiasm and desire that you mentioned, as well as certain cultural patterns that you see as the cause, is there any other reason for the demotivation of women to speak publicly, to be in leadership positions? Are they sufficiently encouraged by leaders, parties, society?*

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: This question is more for ladies, for the fairer sex, they would give the best response to that. Since I have been the head of SNP, I have always encouraged members of the fairer sex to become more actively involved, to contribute, and I believe that a party that would have a woman as its president would certainly get a large part of the votes of the female population. However, somewhere I truly feel that perhaps enough desire or courage is lacking. And we have examples of extremely brave women. I know this well from the time of SNP's protests, the rebellion that we carried out against the already former regime in Montenegro. Here, too, women proved to be the strongest and most loyal to the party. But when certain functions need to be occupied, they are very willing to leave it to someone else. It seems to me that certain woman, who are very capable, educated, have an extraordinary talent to make a serious political career, often know how to say: "Well, that's for someone else, I'll be there, I'm somehow good there." I'm a person of conviction that there should be complete equality and that no distinction should be made.

CCE: *Is there a correlation between their lack of desire or ambition, on the one hand, and the fact that in the last period, to a large extent, they are exposed to hate speech and misogyny, especially when they speak publicly, and we often witness negative and dirty campaigns by different media and actors. Do you see a connection there?*

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: Politics is a public profession. Whoever was involved in politics in Montenegro, at least did the best they could, without being publicly exposed to the often-commissioned bots paid by competing organizations just to smear individuals. Some cannot understand that competition is something healthy, that someone can be competitive without having to express their lowest urges through hidden profiles, faces or bots, in order to slander the one who does his job and often more successfully, honourably and honestly than the one who slanders him.

The one who slanders, in this way, shows all his weakness and filth in his soul, and he is not brave enough, so he also hides behind someone. Everywhere in the world, the public invitation carries this with it. Whoever decided for such a call must understand that it is something that is present, especially in not so transparent societies that are also traditional, such as Montenegro, which has not remembered democracy enough. For as long as Montenegro has existed, we have truly had four rulers. It's simply unbelievable, how far behind Montenegro is, and how many people who once won power can stay in those positions. There is great intoxication in

Montenegro with politics, political events, divisions, and I invite everyone to cherish the culture of dialogue, which we inherited in SNP, and that harsh words and inappropriate words speak more about the one who said it than about the one about whom it is said.

CCE: *It is indisputable that public officials are more exposed to comments, but also that they should show a greater degree of tolerance to public criticism. However, it seems that women are much more exposed to it through insults and attacks on a personal basis. In particular, a member of your party, as well as several of her colleagues from other parties, were almost the targets of such media attacks, so representatives of other parties and colleagues from the Assembly came to their defence. Do you think there is solidarity around this issue among men as well?*

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: I honestly think that there is, but also when a member of the fairer sex is attacked, that it is not on a personal basis, but that it is an attack on political competition. In the absence of political ideas and political offers, they decided to discredit the political opponent. When they can't do it in an honourable way, when they can't do it based on arguments or facts, then attacking in any way is seen as scoring political points. However, it seems to me that those who did it the most are leaving and slowly devaluing the political scene of Montenegro, that is, they are losing support. If someone thinks that women in Montenegro should not have all the rights, if someone thinks that political rights are reserved only for men, then they are mistaken... We in SNP, especially in the Assembly, but also outside the Assembly, have always had sensibility towards members of the fairer sex, so if they did say something to each other, we had a line under which we did not want to, nor will we go.

CCE: *What is the environment for women's political participation within your party and are women given enough space to express their views? Are they given enough media space?*

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: Of course, this is where women show incredible talent and somehow, when an eloquent and beautiful lady says something, it is more striking and beautiful with that diction, the colour of her voice, the beauty she has, it remains more strongly engraved in the memory of the one who hears it than when men say it. And not only that, we will also agree that women have better performances, if only they would free themselves and take responsibility. Here, for the first time in Montenegro, we have a lady as the mayor of the Capital city.

When it comes to these changes and our democratic maturation, it will still take a lot of time, but it should also start from that, so that parents at home have equal treatment for their children. We all know that in Montenegro no inheritance was left to daughters, but, as a rule, sons shared the father's property, while daughters did not receive anything or received a little. If we were to promote and emphasize equality starting from families, the basic unit of society, then through kindergartens and schools, that wave would quickly reach the top and then it could not be stopped. I think that the conquest of complete freedoms, when it comes to the fairer sex, is unstoppable in Montenegro.

We also have another, not only political dimension, given that some studies indicate that women are paid less than men for the same job in Montenegro. We must all fight for this complete freedom, as well as for equal treatment during employment. A person cannot be completely free if he does not have economic freedom. And there should be a certain preference, for example, if members of one and the other gender had the same number of points in a competition, so that there is always an advantage of hiring members of the fairer sex. Definitely, some companies unconsciously think about the male solution, and I am convinced that women can do it incomparably better and more responsibly, more cautiously than men do.

CCE: Does everything you just said conflict with some traditional values that you advocate in the party, and are those two concepts mutually exclusive?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: It is as if you were to ask the citizens of Montenegro and those who nurture some traditional values, whether they nurture the values of Montenegro when it comes to honour and honesty, responsibility for the spoken word, fulfilling made promises. One cannot take what suits someone and not respect what does not suit him. Here I think that they should eliminate it, it was very pronounced in Montenegro in the past period and, to my satisfaction, the new generations are becoming aware and I think they have overcome it. As a father of two daughters and a boy, I am always on my daughters' side and I really encourage them to go forward to study well, to take an appropriate position in society and family tomorrow and to be equal with men.

CCE: CCE's research also shows that in the media, only 2% of the time and space in this election campaign was devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Why do you think that is so?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: It is a devastating fact if only 2% of the space is dedicated to women and it is something that should be pointed out. Montenegro needs to take this very seriously, because it is unacceptable for all those who are participants in the whole process. I believe and am convinced that Montenegro has the strength to overcome it. Namely, when you tell a man of a certain traditional belief that women should not be equal, maybe someone would agree. But if they told him that about his mother, sister, daughter, that is, that they should not be equal, I think they would get a fierce reaction. Perhaps it unconsciously draws its genesis from some of our traditional past, which we must break. However, it is also a fact that we have made enormous progress compared to what used to be.

CCE: When we talk about this progress, it happened for the first time that there are fewer men than women on one list in Montenegro. It is a list with 60% women and 40% men, so SEC returned the list to them for revision because there were not enough people of the less represented sex, men in this case. How do you see that?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: Let that also happen in Montenegro. It's good and that's how it should be and let gender equality be more represented. Let everyone take part and make their contribution to democratization and equality of members of both sexes. Gender equality is something that Montenegro, all institutions, and every individual, especially individuals who are in important state positions, must affirm and to which they must give their full contribution.

CCE: Are these issues (general issues of gender equality and political participation of women, but also their cultural, social, sexual and reproductive rights, economic empowerment, the fight against violence against women, etc.) now/or have they ever been on the official agenda of your political party? Has the party ever campaigned on this issue, especially for these parliamentary elections? Has there been an attempt within the party to more strongly publicize and advocate this issue?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: These issues are on the agenda, and we often mention gender equality. Of course, we in SNP, in the Association of Youth and the Association of Women, and how we respect that issue and are proud of the fact that we have an improved situation compared to what is the state legislation. We have an improved solution when it comes to gender equality, and we know very well that we nurture it. In the future, SNP will continue to contribute to this issue, just as it has made an immeasurable contribution to the overall political scene. There is no political party in Montenegro that has created more leaders and parties that emerged from SNP.

CCE: What is the strength of your Women's Association and how far is their voice heard?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: In general, I think that when it comes to promptness, responsibility, and dedication to work, women are incomparably better than men. And this was shown to me in the company where I have been working for 25 years - when you entrust something to them, it is done more precisely and better than when men do it. For this reason, it might be a good idea to propose that the heads of all parliamentary clubs should be women. I believe that this would lead to less antagonisms, even though women sometimes know how to be zealous members of one political option, but they are more understandable in that communication, they work more on the culture of dialogue than men.

There is one initiative that I really liked. In this transition of power and the fall of the 42nd Government of Zdravko Krivokapić, and the vote of no confidence in this 43rd Government, arose the idea to form a government, all-female, so that all female ministers would be members of the fairer sex. And that would be a big step forward. Unfortunately, this did not happen, maybe it will happen in the future. I would vote for it, but on the other hand, it might mean that we force something that is not the product of complete harmony in society, equality, democracy.

However, perhaps women's responsibility towards the family justifies their weaker participation in politics. As our old proverb says - "A house does not stand on the ground, but on the woman". So, maybe men contribute more to the family in some material sense, but when it comes to raising children, paying attention, orienting children to the future, there are, with all respect for fathers and themselves as fathers, unsurpassed mothers who willingly agree, through our tradition, to sacrifice their career many times in order not to build their progeny.

CCE: Do you think that a higher percentage of women in leadership positions would "bother" the men themselves and what is the role of men in the political empowerment of women?

VLADIMIR JOKOVIĆ: I wouldn't really care if they would mind. Because if men throughout the history of Montenegro did not mind that they were always the ones who decide, why would they mind now if the situation were reversed. From my experience, there where were women, they always gave their best. I mentioned the issue of corruption, crime and similar - women in these spheres did not contribute here. They are more dedicated to some other things, values, and I would have absolutely nothing against that, but on the contrary - I would like them to occupy as many places as possible in the Assembly, in the executive power, and in all state institutions, diplomacy, etc. I am convinced that, where some important role assigned to women, they do it with incomparably greater dedication than men.

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ, list leader of "PEOPLE'S COALITION – UNITED AND PERIOD" (Dejan Vukšić – Christian Democratic Movement; Marko Milačić – Real Montenegro; Vladislav Dajković – Free Montenegro; Dragica Perović – Democratic Serbian Party; dr Novica Stanić – Movement for Pljevlja)

CCE: Does your political party and the coalition with which you entered this electoral process recognize the importance of the issue of gender equality, political participation and empowerment of women? And if so, how does it manifest itself in the party/coalition?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: As a politician, I am relatively new on the political scene, and I am sure that I could not recognize some things until now. Of course, my experience is not such that I might be able to speak more on that topic than some politician who has been dealing with it for a long time. Some things I've really noticed,

and what we're going to talk about today, some things you'll like, some things you won't. I'm sure that 90% of politicians will say something they don't mean, because they don't want to be labelled, that would be bad for their campaigns, for their parties. Unlike them, I will give you my opinion completely freely, regardless of how it will affect anything. What I have noticed so far, when it comes to the political party I belong to, our Christian Democratic Movement and coalition, is that women do the lion's share of the work. I'm sorry that there aren't more women, and I wouldn't want to diminish the importance of men, because I wouldn't like to start from the fact that some jobs are done better by men than women. However, I have noticed that women do organizational work better, that they are more focused, and that they are simply more dedicated to this work.

I'm sorry that there aren't more women, not on the list to fill out the form, but essentially that there aren't more women who really believe in what they do. We have a certain number of women in our political party. For example, one of them who is also on the list, so that other men don't get offended, does more than 50% of the work, she is the alpha and omega of our whole story. It's a shame that more women are not involved in political life, but not to get involved just formally, but to be dedicated, and to believe in it. My position is that, when we compare the progressiveness and intensity of the work of women and men in our movement, there is certainly an imbalance in favor of women who invest much more energy.

CCE: Was it easy to agree within the party, but also the coalition itself, about the number of women, the names of individual female candidates, etc.?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: The fact is that we need more women, not only in the formal - legal sense that needs to be fulfilled, but also in substantial sense. So, the main problem for us is whether we don't have enough women, but whether we have quality women, women in the full sense of the word, those who can contribute, and not just be extras on lists, but be included in the true sense of the word. We didn't have any misunderstandings, but it was a challenge - we didn't have enough women who were interested in getting involved.

CCE: What do you think is the reason for the insufficient engagement of women in politics?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: Here is an illustrative story, and it concerns the tradition of the Montenegrin people. They showed a show a couple of years ago, it was about an interview with one of the oldest Montenegrin women, and she talked about her life. It is done to a woman who is over 100 years old. At the end, the journalist asks her how she predicts the future, to which she laughs and says "catastrophe". He asked her: "Why?". To that she said: "I heard that women have started to judge in Montenegro". So, that's what a woman who is over 100 years old said, and she talks about that tradition, she observes the female population in that way. You didn't hear that from the oldest Montenegrin, so that you could qualify in one way or another, but that's what a woman told you, and it's this recurrence of the past that certainly affect education and everything else.

In my opinion, the main cause is the tradition where a woman has a feeling of lesser value, starting from her mentality and so on. This is one problem, the solution of which takes time to reach the level of development as in modern countries.

CCE: Does this make women discouraged or demotivated and is there a certain kind of fear that they take up positions and become more active?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: Surely is that so. I have seen it with certain women who use their capacities, psycho-physical, to express certain things. As a list leader, in direct communication, I sometimes get embarrassed when I see the way certain women express their conclusions and their way of communicating with me. For example, I say - go

out and say this and that, and she says “no, no, it’s better if you do it”. I notice a certain amount of fear here, how the Montenegrin public will react, and I think that it takes time for that to change.

CCE: Do you see a correlation between that and the fact that women are constantly exposed to hate speech and negative campaigns and offensive, misogynistic comments in public space?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: Now I will tell you one thing that you will like less, that is, a question that remains unclear to me. Do women want to be equal in the full sense of the word? Or do they want to be equal up to a certain point, and in certain spheres to be privileged? In my opinion, that is the question of all questions, whether women really, when they say *equality*, mean equality in the full sense, without any privileges or equality but with privileges.

Hate speech is certainly present, but when it is present among women it is talked about for days, and when it is present among men, it is taken for granted. I’m sure, percentagewise, that the hate speech directed from men to men is much higher than to women, but the latter is written about and considered more, which is as it should be, because women are involved. But then we come to the question - do we want to be equal in the full sense of the word or not.

I will give you another example, from the world of sports. There was a question in sports about whether women should earn the same as men - equally, with women playing two sets and men playing three. Women play two sets and that is not disputed, because they can’t take it anymore, but then the question arises whether we are going to be equal or not. I’m not criticizing, but we must demarcate that part. It is not disputed, if we agreed to be equal but that women have privileges, but that we know that it is with privileges or without privileges...

I come back to the question about insults, of course, it affects women more, but certainly less percentage than men.

CCE: Our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, there was a certain shift in that part of hate speech. Nevertheless, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties, recognizable faces from the political scene. However, almost only women came to the defence of their colleagues. Why? Don’t men see a problem in that, is there solidarity among men?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: Those comments from that quasi-media are disastrous. I don’t even like it when some of those media praise me, because if they praise me, it says something negative about me. When I was elected director of the National Security Agency, for 64 days that media wrote all the worst about me. I’m in my party, I’m not even a supporter of the party to which Božena Jelušić belongs, and about whose leader that portal wrote the nastiest things. No one mentions this, but it was mentioned for Božena Jelušić. What they wrote is disgusting and I know what kind of comments they are, and it offends and affects women more. So, I am in favour of equality with certain privileges for women, they must be privileges, they are natural, they are simply like that and they must become and then women will give their full contribution. A woman doesn’t need to say - I don’t need privileges, it’s simply biological, physically it’s just like that, a man can lift 200 kg and she can’t. I am for equality with certain privileges for women and that women should not be angry that I say so.

CCE: Were these issues (general issues of gender equality and political participation of women, but also their cultural, social, sexual and reproductive rights, economic empowerment, the fight against violence against women, etc.) part of your coalition’s campaign?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: These questions were not emphasized. I really think it should, but in the right way. I am a supporter of not going to one extreme when it comes to women, although no one wants to say that publicly for political reasons, but simply, there is no need to go in that direction. Women's equality must exist, because women, as a rule, do whatever job they do, with much more enthusiasm than us men. Surely, more attention should be paid to these things when it comes to the campaign, but I think that we must motivate these women, it is not enough just to go to the campaign and then get some political points, but with a concrete attitude towards women, they need to be motivated, to break away from it and give their full contribution. I am repeating myself, but I would be happy if we had more women in politics. Here and now in this campaign, whatever we organize, it is mostly done by women, if it fell to us men, nothing would be finished, we would not be able to carry out any of the campaign without women.

CCE: *Did you undertake any activities within the collation to motivate women, were there any women who were unsure whether to come forward publicly, to be on the list, etc.?*

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: Yes, there have been such cases, especially when it comes to public appearances. Let's say we are really pushing for women to go out in public more. I'm not going to mention names, but there are women who go out for a public performance, and I hear that they are not satisfied, and the performance was great. This uncertainty is incredibly noticeable, and it is a consequence of everything we mentioned before. Do we work in person? I personally work and try to make them as visible as possible, and this gives the campaign a totally different dimension.

CCE: *CCE's research also shows that in the media, only 2% of the time and space in the current campaign is devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Why do you think that is so?*

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: Politicians generally think that it is not something that brings political points, they are not interested in it, they are simply only interested in what they say, improving their ratings. These are professional politicians, politics is everything to them, and I am new to politics, and I am not burdened at all. It's mine to say what I think, and how the citizens will accept it, maybe they will be happy or sorry, but that's it...

CCE: *Research also shows that women are more trusted when it comes to areas such as education, health, upbringing, social policies, while positions are reserved for men in the areas of national security, fighting crime, defence, etc. Do you think that exactly in this direction we need to think and appoint professional and qualified women to these positions, how were these stereotypes destroyed?*

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: Not to blame it on women, but it is important in life to know what you want and to invest all your energy in that direction, in order to assert yourself. You mentioned the security sector, in addition to the necessary qualifications to work successfully in the security sector, in my opinion, three conditions must be fulfilled: 1) that you are expert and professional, 2) honourable and honest and 3) that you are brave.

This courage means that you have to assert yourself. I don't think women push themselves in the right way to be recognized. We now have a new list where women have imposed themselves and drawn attention to themselves. If you wait for someone else to push it, then it shows the insufficient courage of those women to work in the security sector tomorrow, I was specifically intrigued by that list. Who are the women who bravely came out? Let's say, when we were with the newly elected President for an interview, the way this woman spoke drew my attention, and I think that this is the first step – it cannot be done by force, it is not easy, a man cannot do anything alone and always needs support, but it is up to women.

CCE: So, what else do we need to do and what, in your opinion, are the best mechanisms for involving women in political life?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: I think that everyone should do exactly what you are doing - educationally, that there are NGOs, institutions, that certain groups and certain institutions are targeted where we have women whose potential is not used in the full sense. We need to force this story, to organize gatherings as often as possible, where first of all, women will be able to honestly express what their psychological obstacles are, to try to assert themselves in the world of politics. A priority among privileges should be made. When you enter politics, there is an agenda of political action, where only percentages are considered, and then these things are completely forgotten. I'm not sure that the parties, even when they have their own women's forums, honestly work in this direction, that's why I think that what you are doing should be done, and I started to think about this during the conversation.

CCE: In the end, how do you see quotas - as a transitional mechanism or as an essential solution that would lead to greater female political participation?

DEJAN VUKŠIĆ: As a legalist, I find that pointless. What I'm about to say is not popular - you now have a situation where you impose something psychologically on someone due to a combination of circumstances. It could be that in a certain political party there is such a set of circumstances that you have a certain number of women or men whose quality deserves to be in those 5, 6, 7 first places on the list and now you must eliminate someone who does not deserve it. You then artificially come to the proportion that is imposed. They also say the same for, say, judges, that among the 7 judges there must be a representative, two representatives of national minorities, and if there are 10 candidates, we have 8 of the best candidates and 2 who are national minorities who do not know anything about it. I will be eliminated because someone is from a national minority. I think that is wrong, I am a supporter of the thesis that it is better for the case to fail than the system.

I don't like that approach and I don't think that anything will be achieved that way, if you forcefully have (30%) women. Some *pro forma* figures will appear there, but essentially nothing will happen. It is essential to work, gatherings, seminars, above all women, to motivate them to be more active and to draw attention to themselves, and until you draw attention to yourself, no one will hear you.

GENCI NIMANBEGU, list leader of Albanian alliance – Aleanca Shqiptare

CCE: Does your political party recognize the importance of issues of gender equality, political participation and empowerment of women? If so, how does it manifest itself in the party/coalition?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: I am personally satisfied with how we managed to animate and involve women in the electoral process. Here I do not mean only on participation in the lists, but also the affirmation of their capacity in relation to the needs of society, not only for gender equality but for development, preservation of the family, cultural life, etc. Unfortunately, politics is still, or at least the top of politics, in a way, left to the male gender. In this regard, we have always taken steps that would lead to greater participation of women in political life. Our list exceeds the legal minimum, but as a minority list, we aspire to one mandate, and as the president of the party, I am therefore also the leader of the list.

We have a Women's Forum formed within the party, which has been very active for 12 years, and which has contributed to the growth of our party in the past period. Also, we had a Congress two years ago, during which we significantly increased the number of women in the Main Board. Our Presidency, unfortunately, only has

a representative of the Women's Forum, but these are some inherited things and I hope that this election campaign will help strengthen and advance the role of women.

CCE: How do you assess the low representation of women in the political life of Montenegro and in general in management positions, in decision-making positions?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: I will not go into the assessment; I said that I am not satisfied with what has been done so far. However, I can also brag about some of our decisions. For example, our party manages two companies in Ulcinj and one of the directors is a female. So, if you were to look at it, not only in percentage terms, we gave a chance and trust not only to that person, but also to manage a significant company. Furthermore, as regards some secretariats or leading positions, compared to the earlier period when we did not have any, we now have two secretariat secretaries, which is a significant step forward and we are very satisfied with their work.

I hope that this will motivate other people to accept management positions as well. Until now, it wasn't that we didn't want to include them, but there was some deviation even among the women themselves or members of the party, and I can tell you that there is also a lack of awareness that women should be included in political life, not only through the Women's Forum but also through the decision-making process in high positions.

CCE: What do you see as the reason for this deflection among women, their discouragement and demotivation to step into public political life and to fight for their rights, but also for the rights of other groups and the overall progress of society?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: The reasons are probably multiple. I think the main ones come from some tradition or way of thinking, but I can tell you that women are more responsible. Our political life is that of an immature democracy, so, among other things, it is designed in such a way that engaging in politics is marked as half-honourable or dishonourable. In addition, the processes that took place in Montenegro, where there was a lot of clientelism and party influence on all institutions, probably additionally influenced them to be demotivated. Of course, the key is the insufficiently developed awareness of society that through the participation of women in political life, we ensure the application of not only our program principles, which we all have in statutes, programs, the Constitution, laws, but also that we will make society better and more democratic. I also think that political processes in Montenegro would be much easier and faster if this awareness were more developed.

CCE: Are these issues (general issues of gender equality and political participation of women, but also their cultural, social, sexual and reproductive rights, economic empowerment, the fight against violence against women, etc.) now/or have they ever been on the official agenda of your political party? Has the party ever, especially for these parliamentary elections, run a campaign on this issue, has there been an attempt within the party to more strongly publicize and advocate this issue?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: Very weak, especially when it comes to women's rights. Our party is a national party and our program is focused on the rights of our minority community. We appreciate that there are many elements where we are discriminated against in Montenegro, and we focus more on that part of the campaign. Of course, the political past shows that we supported legal proposals that led to equality, but I must honestly say that the campaign, not only of our party but also of all others, is not focused on that. You can see that she is focused on economic topics, on wages, pensions, on free housing, wider economic profit, or progress. As far as human rights are concerned, the minority parties certainly talk about these issues, but to be honest, I don't even know how the public would receive these messages from a party that would only talk about these topics. On the other hand, we have a list made up predominantly of women and we will see their results in the elections.

CCE: Is your party aware of the obstacles faced by women who are or want to be part of public life and occupy certain positions in politics and society?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: They are, but they are not sufficiently encouraged or focused to take concrete steps. I am personally advocating, and I proved it as the party president by changing our awareness in relation to women in leadership positions. In the past mandates, there were fewer of them, and now we are seriously moving towards a big job. It is not only a matter of will, but also of insufficient motivation or encouragement of women to clearly express their ambitions in this direction. I will encourage every policy not only of the members of the Main Committee, but also of other members of the party, to promote that approach. A big problem is the insufficient participation of women in the management boards of companies. And this does not only happen in our party, but also in other parties, and this is a real indicator, despite the legal, statutory provisions, declared statements, insufficient awareness or insufficient desire to implement what has been publicly said and written down.

CCE: In the past period, were there certain initiatives, proposals by women themselves to give them more space within the party, within the campaign, within the media? Is this climate generally conducive to their affirmation and empowerment?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: We had a woman president of one of the then three municipal committees. So, there are such initiatives and over time they will be a comprehensive part of our program and activities. My political experience shows that sometimes even the determination of percentage participation is necessary for some societies, with the fact that then a paradox arises. For example, Western countries say that we have a set percentage of women's participation on electoral lists, and this is not reflected in the houses where they are represented, whether they are municipal assemblies, state assemblies, etc. and they themselves have a system that does not encourage that. For example, the electoral systems in Great Britain or USA do not have this percentage, but these are advanced societies, or Scandinavian countries that have a much higher percentage of not only women in the Assembly, but also presidents of states, the Government. This proves that with the development of society comes this equality.

CCE: We have witnessed that in the largest number of cases, on all 15 electoral lists for parliamentary elections, women are represented almost to the minimum extent required by law. What is the reason for that? And your list had something like 31% women, which means that the legal minimum was respected, but why weren't there more women on it and did you do anything to encourage them to get more of them on the electoral list?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: We are a slightly specific list, that is, a coalition made up of four subjects. The presidents of all four entities are male, and this determined part of the dynamics of the formation of these lists, and also reduced the percentage of women. In this period, we did not focus on increasing the number, we simply estimated that the compilation of any list includes several elements to attract voters - either by names, or by the regions from which they are represented, or by party. These are individual decisions of all parties. That's what we did, but maybe the other members of the coalition are on a smaller number, so that affected the number in only 31%.

CCE: What would be the mechanisms that you as a party or coalition can use to increase the representation of women and strengthen female leadership in politics? What is the biggest obstacle and how to address it?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: This is a very complex issue, which is related to education and other institutions, the university, the economy, etc. I remind you that most property in Montenegro is in the hands of men. This clearly

shows that there are many things that need to be worked on, and I think that the economic programs we offer will enable the empowerment of women and strengthen those women who have leadership predispositions. In this way, we will respect quality and meritocracy, and I hope that this is one of the ways in which we will increase the participation of women. Of course, there is also the Women's Forum, then cooperation with international organizations, because we work to raise awareness. We also have very good cooperation with the non-governmental sector, and there are very high-quality female staff in the non-governmental sector, with the fact that in the past period, a lot of people from the non-governmental sector moved into politics. I do not see it as inevitably positive because, on the other hand, in addition to their capacity, which is proven in politics, the non-governmental sector has weakened.

CCE: Does among us, the voters, the so-called voting sexism in our country exists, meaning the preference of voters to vote for a man rather than a woman because they perceive men as more capable, courageous, decisive, etc.? If so, how does that consciousness change?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: I don't have a specific opinion on this issue. After all, we are a society that is patriarchal, that is just modernizing, changing in good but also in some bad directions. As a party, we really start from the fact that a healthy family is the basis of a healthy society, and surely this can influence voters and traditional roles in the home, society, state, ... These are things that are not inevitably bad or negative, because a good host is always followed. The Albanian community in Montenegro is aware that the leadership role in the family or society is always taken by the most similar person, not the one who is inevitably the bearer of some gender. So, we have a lot of cases where women are also good hosts.

CCE: Is this also reflected on the political level, and are "power" sectors in Montenegro, such as security and defence, reserved predominantly for men, while women are directed more towards "softer" departments, such as education, health, social policies, etc? Is that changing?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: Women are overrepresented in education, healthcare, or the judiciary, and all these sectors are labelled as bad and those where everything must be corrected. And not only from our society, but also from the international community. If I am not mistaken, when we talk about the structure of judges in Montenegro, over 60% of judges are women. But still, I claim that the development of society will lead to a better position of women in Montenegro. Currently, domestic violence against women is expressed as misogyny. It is a kind of confrontation with this progress, the information society where, unfortunately, more bad news is spread than good news. Then society becomes more nervous, closed, more aggressive, which is a problem that affects politics, society, and the family, and these are things that we must solve. Not individually, but together, and not only us as politicians, but the whole society.

CCE: The law in Montenegro provides for a minimum quota of 30% and that every four candidates, i.e., female candidates, are on the electoral list. Do you see this as an affirmative action measure and a good solution? Is it only formally observed or do you believe that there is a substantive understanding of the background of this problem?

GENCI NIMANBEGU: Albania has had a woman president of the Assembly several times. And I'm not sure that they did it because of gender representation, or quotas in their system, but because of the quality measure or the decision that was accepted. To be president of the Assembly, someone must have at least 51% of the votes. In Kosovo, two presidents were women. In Montenegro, we had the President of the Assembly for a short period and now Mrs. Đurović, I would say, as a product of the political situation, not as some compromise. I also note that, for example, in Albania, the Minister of Defence was a woman. I don't think that it is respected for the sake

of order, but that it is about the influence of several factors - relations in the political party and in coalitions, but also the affinity or desire of those who decide on it. Let's say, here I think that the Prime Minister who proposes the Government should not only fulfil the quota as some kind of decor, that persons of the female gender receive only Ministries that are less important than the others, but that it is also their personal decision and I hope that these activities will contribute to increase awareness.

CCE: *In the last few years, hate speech, misogynist, sexist comments and negative campaigns directed towards women in political and public life have been particularly pronounced. Although our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, a certain shift was achieved in that part, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties. However, almost only women came to the defence of their colleagues. Why is this so and don't men see a problem in it?*

GENCI NIMANBEGU: Well, I'm not sure that only women stand up in defence, people who are brave enough or informed enough to do that stand up. After all, as a politician, I have been targeted so many times with some statements that are untrue, revanchist, or cause national intolerance. It is a process that is also the result of the influence of social networks on the right to speak. Surely, this is also something that we have to put in order legally, because unfortunately I see that it only further contributes to the divisions of society. I personally believe that people live more and more in some information bubbles, and that based on their interests, the programs that manage social networks are constantly spinning the same information to the same people based on what they were previously engaged in. They target them because of commercial interests, where some of the potential consumers of the services will profit due to the greater number of clips. In this society in which we engage in politics, it has really become unsustainable. That's why we're no longer able to react constantly, because that would mean giving greater importance to such pointless, crazy, misogynistic statements that only poison the people. And not even society itself reacts enough to such things...

CCE: *CCE's research also shows that only 2% of the time and space in the media during the campaign is devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Why do you think that is so?*

GENCI NIMANBEGU: As I mentioned before, this is because we have a different focus. Focus on national or economic law. It is clear that such a divided society in Montenegro does not give enough space to the topics you are talking about. Again, I return to the thesis that with economic, social, cultural development, these topics will come to the fore more and more and that these are things that are happening. This is not pushed under the carpet, problems are lined up, so through the interaction of members of society, solutions are reached. We are going in the right direction and our start was not bad. Simply, as a developed, western society, we will adopt the best values of those societies, and I hope not the negative ones. Because, politically, I do not agree that there is a middle gender in society. I'm a bit more traditional, but I respect the right for someone not to express themselves about it. I would stand up for the protection of that person so that she is not discriminated against, but I would not give it too much public space, because I think that these topics occupy a small part of society, and we need to be focused so that the majority of that society moves forward.

SRĐAN PERIĆ, list leader of Reversal for a safe Montenegro

CCE: *What is the general position of your movement on issues of gender equality, political participation and political empowerment of women? In what way is such an attitude manifested in the movement?*

SRĐAN PERIĆ: We are not a political party, but a group of citizens. It is possible that, at some point, we will go

towards the formalization of the structure, because the desire is to open more, among other things, because of this segment, and if you make the structure prematurely, its modifications will be much more difficult later. We wish to have as wide a reach as possible so that quality would be higher. As for the position of women, or as the law recognizes them - the less represented gender, there is a possibility that refers to the legal part of the quota, but it is not an essential solution, but only an instrument that should first remind all of how far we have gone, when it should be regulated by the law. The position of women in the Reversal is illustrated by the fact that there is one woman out of three key people on the list, and this is roughly a tendency that is passed on, with the fact that we are an informal structure, so these are more coordinator roles than formal executive roles. In media statements and announcements in front of the Reversal, we were aiming for that ratio to be 40:60, with the desire that it would be completely balanced in the future. I would like to add that we are a young movement and that there is still work to be done in this field. It is necessary, regardless of gender, that people acquire media routines. There is another factor that further complicates the situation - the closedness of the media for civil entities that are not, in some way, established. This further discourages everyone, especially those who are already discouraged in political life, and the media has a great responsibility in this. Of course, on a declarative level, they will say everything that is affirmative when there is positive discrimination, but in a concrete situation when it is necessary to enable that person to say something, then they begin to withdraw principles and the interests of political mega-structures come to the fore, and where men come to the fore. The result, then, is double discouragement. There is no giving up, but there is an additional burden - both culturally, economically, politically, and sociologically. In addition to all that, when you carry a burden in every field and someone burdens you, not only politically, but also in the media sense, then you have a discouragement that is worryingly strong.

CCE: So, do you think that in general as a movement you lack space in the media, especially when it comes to the appearances of women?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: That's right. We, for example, had a situation when we were willing to discuss certain items, and specifically when two women wanted to speak about it, but they could not get to the space. At the same time, I am convinced that it was not because they are women, but because they come from a civil entity that has no one behind them, but they, I repeat, get discouraged. It is this bad message that must be changed on several levels.

CCE: How do you rate the low representation of women in political life and in decision-making positions?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: Devastating, but it's not from yesterday. It seems that the biggest step forward was made in the period after the Second World War. And instead of continuing that trend in the 90s and reaching a society that would achieve a full expression of equality, we have come to experience a kind of regression. Women do not have the same pay for the same jobs and have a more difficult transition in a significant majority of any hierarchies. Stereotypes of what a woman's role is, what a man's role is, what a woman can and can't do, are now being removed, but we still hear these things in 2023. This is especially pronounced when women are quite self-aware, and when they are in some sphere of public space and when they look back at the deepest social problems, that they go through the worst and the lowest outpourings of primitivism, in which almost always a misogynistic moment runs through. The dirtiest campaigns in Montenegro were carried out precisely against women, and that is a cause for concern. We failed to adequately sanction those who inspired those campaigns in court proceedings. There have been certain verdicts for insulting honor and reputation, but this does not repair the damage done. It is something that gives ethical satisfaction, but overall, it is not even close to an adequate replacement.

CCE: Even at the very beginning of this campaign for the parliamentary elections, we witnessed an extremely negative campaign against several recognizable female faces from the political scene of

Montenegro by a particular media portal. How do you rate it?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: I can't cover all media releases, but something that has reached to me is absolutely unacceptable, in the sense that you are essentially making women into political objects for every kind of loading from misogynistic connotations to, on a human level, degradation of personality. This, quite often, has meanings that are also related to gender affiliation. It happens in a political struggle that I have a woman as an interlocutor with whom I do not agree, but that polemic is reduced to the rank of arguments. But the moment you, whether you are aware of it or not, and I don't know which is worse, use gender affiliation to show some of your imagined superiority, then we have a huge problem that only produces extremely negative stereotypes.

CCE: Were these questions present at some point in your campaign for the parliamentary elections?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: Several times the members of the Reversal pointed to this issue in public debates, as well as on social networks, because we have a problem with access to the media. We talked about it, we discussed it at small tribunes with citizens and wherever we had space. In the local elections, we hardly dealt with any topic except the communal one, with a few reactions related to the violation of human rights.

In addition, I would like to point out that we only stated basic principles publicly, because we were faced with the fact that people from other political entities almost repeat what we publish. This is a certain recognition, but it slows us down politically and forces us to gradually explain our ideas. I repeat, it is not disputed that someone takes over an idea, but if they compromise it with a distorted interpretation, then an initially good idea can become meaningless. That's why you need to patiently explain what the basic ideas are, and for that you need gradualism.

CCE: Is your movement aware of the obstacles faced by women who would like to be or are already part of public life?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: I believe it is. In the top twenty on the list, four women gave up just before handing in the list, thinking that it was too much for them. One of them (entrepreneur) said - *"I already have problems; I don't need more"*. No matter how much we talk, they stay there, they contribute, but that is a signal to you of what discouragement means, but also how difficult it is when you deal with some operational situations that are demanding for an entity that is just being built. In general, on the political scene, there is a dominant male structure that sets limits for women. If a woman performs in a subject where she will have greater autonomy, where she will be stronger, she has a more difficult passage, but if she goes to a mega-structure, as a rule, she will be put in one place to *"fill the quota"*, *"put in the shop-window"*, and the point does not change. This apparent policy remains, it is a continuous problem, and we are not making any progress there - we are all stuck with that percentage of 30% women, every fourth woman on the list. I think that getting closer to say 45:55% would be good. Or, to say that the order in the list must be alternating. The prejudice is that politics is a *"man's job"*, although men are more interested in it.

CCE: What is the environment for the political participation of women in the Reversal and are they given enough space within the movement?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: I think I'm being subjective here. It seems to me that we do not make any difference, but that is my subjective feeling. You should ask one of your colleagues, but in general, in informal communication, in designing the program, things go much easier there. When you get to the public part, when you enter the public space, there is more resistance to that kind of exposure. This is a matter that is not exclusively related to gender equality, it is often a matter of media training and a routine that takes time.

CCE: What have you personally done, within the party and as the leader of the list, to motivate or inspire women to enter the electoral race and to become active within the movement?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: The only means I can have is conversation and conviction. I do this to the extent that I know, can and know how. I don't have any other instruments, nor do I want to. It can be more, it can be better - I don't have any dilemma, more efforts should be made. On the other hand, I often feel like someone who has opened too many fronts, because you still need to take care of what you can achieve on which front. But I repeat, it can be more, it can be better, I am aware that more efforts must be made in this direction.

CCE: We have witnessed that in most cases, on all 15 lists for parliamentary elections, women are represented in almost the smallest possible measure required by law, i.e., 30%. What is the reason for that?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: Maybe it would be good if, if that's the only thing that works, we increase the quotas. Of course, it would be nicer if we pushed it ourselves. There is one more thing, to be completely honest, I think it is also the responsibility of women to get more involved. I believe that there are a lot of self-conscious women who are not willing to participate in politics. There is something with men as well, but here the problem is more striking and pronounced. Therefore, power is absolutely concentrated in men's hands, but it is also up to women to claim it back.

CCE: Apart from this discouragement, do you think that there is a certain misunderstanding in the parties or a conscious intention to discredit women? I remind you that earlier municipal election commissions openly and illegally announced lists with an insufficient number of women, which always went unsanctioned.

SRĐAN PERIĆ: It can be both. People are not aware of how arbitrarily the parties and their leaders behave, because the power is in their hands. There is a lot of superficiality because the parties are thinking about who gives them more safe votes. As the previous, so is the current government. It seems that men can make more confident voices and then they are more penetrating. So, the fight for the same is a real fight that goes on, and every fight costs you time and resources of any kind - from nerves to money. This struggle is valuable, but it must include a merciless criticism of everything and everyone who slows down essentially emancipatory processes. The stereotype is that voters trust men more. I attended that, when the field is toured, where people want to hear a woman recognized by the media.

CCE: Let's put aside the voters and their attitude towards this issue, but we are aware of the fact that on the Montenegrin political scene, sectors such as security, defence, etc. are so-called. "male" sectors. Do the parties here have a conscious intention to place only men in such positions of power and discredit women?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: They say that in life you have friends, enemies, and party friends. Unfortunately, there are people of great ambition in the parties. In any case, if they have something they can use as an advantage in politics, people very often use it - if you have a gender stereotype "on your side" and it will be used. That's why you can hear backroom stories: "she's good but..." and then some of the gender stereotypes are given.

CCE: Why weren't there more women on your list?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: The criticism stands, I admit and accept it, we will work on it. I have already stated part of the reason.

CCE: What, in your opinion, are the mechanisms for the inclusion of women in politics?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: First of all - legally, which I personally think would not be bad to improve. On the other hand, persistence. It would be good if men also showed more responsibility for this, but women should ask for more to get more. Like any group with less rights, you get more when you ask for more. Here is an interesting example - when people protested against the construction of small hydroelectric plants, where the locals were completely with you, you could do a lot, where they were not, you were very limited. So, when those who are affected are involved in the fight - it's easier.

CCE: How can we encourage the men themselves in the parties to get more involved in that part and empower their female colleagues?

SRĐAN PERIĆ: Often there is a process of raising awareness, but I'm afraid it doesn't have much effect. It is a very long process that should have a lot of mutual steps, there should be a clear strategy that includes legal solutions, some kind of action plan that should show that we are moving in the desired direction. It should be constantly reminded of what is the goal. Not much can be achieved here in the short term, but in continuity over several years, I think that significant progress can still be made here. We need that reversal.

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ, list leader of "Yes. We can for Civil Montenegro"

CCE: It is interesting that there is an extremely large number of women on your list. What motivated you to gather in this way before the parliamentary elections and what is the structure of your movement?

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: We got together informally a long time ago, approximately in 2003. They were all women, and our goal was to carry out certain humanitarian actions for socially vulnerable and sensitive categories - the elderly, children, and women. We have never dealt with the media because we do not belong to those who believe that every work of theirs should be presented to the public. Sometime from 2021 we exist as a civil movement - NGO *We can*. When we put the name, *We can*, we didn't mean *WE* in the movement, but all together - as a society. That's how we started this political game because we don't like this Montenegro. We never thought of entering politics, we were never involved in politics, but when we saw that someone was dealing with our lives, that someone was making decisions on our behalf, and that someone was obviously less capable and less educated and less expert for that, and he has a lot of bad intentions and mainly looks at his personal interest and the interest of his political party, we decided to get involved in that political game. Then we became a civil movement that got involved in political life. Our colleagues also came to us, there are already about 30-40 men there, and we are going to the elections in a coalition with the Civic Montenegro party. All of us who joined the movement were accomplished in our professions and in our lives, but we felt the need and obligation to contribute and to make this society and the country of Montenegro, for which we think is going down a bad path, a nicer place to live for all of us who we live here.

CCE: The position of women in Montenegrin society is one of the backbones of your program?

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: Of course, this is one of the key topics that we have been dealing with for decades - the position of women in Montenegrin society and helping women in Montenegro to take their lives into their own hands and contribute more to themselves, their families and society. That is one of the items, and now it is our priority, when we decided to go to the parliamentary elections, to fight for the complete depoliticization and deparitization of Montenegrin society. This is a prerequisite for everything good that needs to happen, only when it is done in all spheres of life in Montenegro, in all institutions, only then can other things

be solved. When the judiciary is not divided politically, when we no longer hear in the Assembly which judges are ours and which are yours, and how will we expect those judges to pass judgment according to justice and law - they will pass according to which political party they belong to. This creates not only insecurity but also fear among citizens, and we will fight for meritocracy - that people who are educated, professional and know how to work, who have proven themselves, get to the right places, regardless of which group they belong to. Only when this is achieved will Montenegrin society be able to move forward. We will fight for that, it will be the first item, and only after that all other matters will be resolved, i.e., we will work to improve the quality of life of citizens, and this includes healthcare, education, culture, which are the pillars of society that everyone has neglected.

CCE: *What is the position of women in Montenegrin politics, in decision-making positions, but also in society in general? How do you comment on the insufficient representation of women in these positions?*

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: It is obvious that they are very little represented in politics and that some parties had to do something about it by force of law. There is a legal provision that every fourth place must be occupied by a person belonging to the less represented sex, but this was somehow understood by other parties - that it was a woman and they put them in every fourth place because they had to. There are very good women in Montenegrin politics, there have been there all this time. Unfortunately, there were few of them, and what indicates that there should be many more women is that the Women's Club functioned best in the Assembly, although there were women from all parties. Why aren't there more? I think there is little even because of the women themselves, because Montenegrin society is a place where it is difficult for women to be encouraged to go into that sphere of public life, especially that of political life where society tends to look at her under a microscope and find flaws in her that she does not have, and that he calls her out for things she shouldn't be called out for. Women then hesitate to go into that sphere. There are more women on our list, and that's why I think it's up to women. Of course, not only to women, because in parties that already exist, men should really include their female colleagues, family members whom they know are capable and can perform these functions.

We in our movement did not have these problems, not even when we entered a coalition with an already existing party, namely Civic Montenegro, they did not have a majority of women, but they did not have any problem, on the contrary, they pushed our story and included more women who belonged to their party. That's how we became one unit, and they accepted that there should be women from their party in key positions both with them and in front of men. And not only did they accept, but they really supported wholeheartedly.

CCE: *You mentioned the Women's Club in the Assembly. Do you think that there is essential solidarity within that body? How difficult is it to overcome narrow-party positions and agree at least on those issues that are important for women themselves?*

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: Perhaps it is not even realistic to expect that there is solidarity, however, they belong to certain parties, and if that were the case, then they would form their own party. Realistically, it is not even to be expected that they will vote the same, I can also see from us - we are a movement that is in a coalition with one party, but we harmonize our positions on some key issues. So far, we have had absolutely no disagreements and we all think the same about every key issue for Montenegro. However, it is good that they all reacted when one of the women was exposed to insults, insults, and attacks. This is an incentive to develop this female solidarity in Montenegro and to help other women who are still stuck, who still cannot be encouraged to take their lives in their own hands, to be empowered to do so.

CCE: What are the obstacles faced by women who are or want to be part of public life and occupy certain positions in politics and society?

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: None of the women from our movement or the party with which we are in the coalition is perhaps not a good interlocutor, because none of us has ever faced such obstructions and disparagement because she is a woman and perhaps, she does not get an adequate place because of that. This is passed down from the family, that is, the basic cell of society, and how does a woman gain security there, if she feels protected in her family, and has the support to invest in herself, to get an education, to take her life into her own hands, to be economical independent, which is the starting point of everything, then it will be much easier to be involved in all spheres of life.

We are working on this empowerment of women; we have had many actions when it comes to single mothers. We help them to get a job, to see what their abilities are, what their qualifications are. We encourage them all to start some kind of entrepreneurship, because there are conditions and good programs for both women in business and for beginners in business, as long as people who are from these socially vulnerable structures do not know how to use it. We are here to help them start their own small business that will bring them income. We have had excellent results and drastic changes can be seen in these women. So, it is important to empower the woman in the family, that she carries from the family that she is completely equal to her brothers, that she gets an education, that she starts working and that she is economically independent. Everything after that goes much easier, because really none of us has ever encountered any obstacle, but probably because we carry it from the family.

CCE: Do you think that one of the solutions for empowering women would be a greater number of women in decision-making positions, in leadership positions, who will also send them messages of encouragement in that way?

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: Even our appearance, even though we have not yet entered the government structures, sent an excellent message. A large number of women contact us who are enthusiastic and join, and we are very pleased by the fact that a large number of young women, students, who have the support of their families join us. We have had cases in the field, when we go to the city where our female members are from, who are students, that their parents come to us and thank us for their daughters getting involved in this. So, the situation is already changing - fathers want to see their daughters in that public life, for them to expose themselves, to show their abilities and their knowledge, wanting them to one day, when they finish their studies, start working and be publicly exposed, to take on more functions. So, our appearance also did a lot for women. It would be better if the number of both the Parliament and the executive increased, then it would become something normal, as it is in European countries. We represent the thesis that we think is a reality - there should be more women, because women are more determined, braver, deal better with problems in general, are more rational and make decisions much more wisely, without involving too much emotion, especially when it comes to decisions that are important both for the family and for the state and for the whole society. So far, male politicians have had the opportunity, so we've seen that it doesn't exactly go as it should. Now is the chance for women to prove themselves in the next four years.

CCE: On the Montenegrin political scene, until now, areas such as national security, fighting crime, defence, etc., were almost exclusively "men's". Do you think that in this direction we should think differently and appoint professional and qualified women to manage these departments, and how would we destroy the existing stereotypes that women have no place in these positions?

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: We believe that women would be better at managing all sectors. When they say defence and security, one immediately thinks that someone is now going to fight, to go to war, etc. Of course, there are currently women executives, but when we talk about the head of the sector, I think that women would bring more rational, braver, better decisions than men. Of course, with your associates and with a hierarchy where there would certainly be more men in that security sector, which is fine, but women leading those sectors would be a better solution. Also, we are sure that a woman would be better in the sphere of economy and finance. Definitely, no matter how much men in Montenegro boast that they are the head of the house, everyone knows that the woman is the pillar of the house, the woman deals with the finances of the house, and more and more men already admit it. And it turned out that a woman takes care of the household budget much better and does it much more rationally, and she would do it at the state level as well, so the economy sector would need women.

CCE: *CCE's research, from the beginning of the campaign, showed that only 2% of the time and space in the media was devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Why do you think that is so?*

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: All parties, when they go to the elections, look at how they will get the most voters. Unfortunately, the issue of gender equality has not yet come up, because they believe that it will not get as many votes as they might with some identity or economic issues. Allegedly, these are always crucial elections, they are always about the state of the state and the economy, and then issues of gender equality are never on the agenda. Although, if you ask men, they will say that women are equal. But it is clear that there are not enough women, and not only in politics, but there are no women in positions, there are no company directors, etc. There are women in the judiciary, medicine, etc., but because they are more oriented towards these professions.

CCE: *Is there a need to work more with men within the movement or are they sufficiently educated and sensitized about gender equality?*

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: No, not really. On the contrary, they left their place to women, they considered women to be more capable, but again this is probably because they are men who have achieved success in their lives and their professions. A man who is fulfilled in his life and who is aware of his qualities and his strength will not be bothered by a strong woman, such a woman will only bother him who is not fulfilled and who has some complexes, and that is why he will be bothered by a woman who is stronger and more capable than him.

An interesting thing even happened here. We had to, to submit the electoral list, look for more men to fulfil the quota. Women somehow approached us, spontaneously, they want changes, they want to come forward, they show more courage. Citizens need to understand that their vote is very important, that their vote can be decisive, maybe even preliminary, in who will take that part of the government and then what kind of decisions will he make.

CCE: *To what extent are quotas an essential solution, and to what extent are they just some kind of transitional mechanism?*

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: I don't think it's bad that someone thought to insert it into the law. It's tragic that someone had to include that percentage of women in the law, but it's good, because that's how the issue was raised, so I think that now it is already heading towards the fact that it will increase spontaneously.

CCE: How can men themselves within the parties contribute and what actions should they take to increase the level of political participation of women?

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: We, for example, the men who are part of not only our movement, but also part of the party with which we entered into a coalition, right before the elections, do not need to be specially educated, they completely accept this story, and I don't think that anyone needs encouragement, except to accept that women and men are completely equal, in every sense. Of course, men differ in some sense and things, but as far as functioning, work, business, I really think positively. A man needs to be accomplished, aware of his qualities, and then he won't have any problems with the fact that a woman is next to him on some function.

CCE: In the last few years, hate speech, misogynist, sexist comments and negative campaigns directed towards women in political and public life have been particularly pronounced. Although our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, a certain shift was achieved in that part, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties. However, almost only women came to the defence of their colleagues. Why is this so and don't men see a problem in it?

DRAGICA PEROVIĆ IVANOVIĆ: That's definitely a problem, they had to. First, they had to take a stand, in my opinion men have to protect, stand up for their female colleagues. Women spoke up because they can put themselves in a position where someone belittles them, but the real thing is only when men start to react. Unfortunately, it is obvious that this is still not the case and I hope that it will change, because the point is that they attack the one who said it and that they defend women, only then will it be a sincere support of men for women to be in public life. When a woman defends a woman, she defends because it bothers her, she sees herself in that position and practically defends herself, but the real thing will be when men start to come forward in that way.

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ, list leader of TOGETHER! For the future that belongs to you (DPS, SD, DUA, LP)

CCE: What is the party's general position on issues of gender equality, women's political participation and women's empowerment? How does this manifest itself in the party/coalition?

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: Whenever we talk about the participation of women in politics, we are talking about the representation that is defined by law, that is, certain quotas. To be honest, quotas were introduced when society did not recognize the necessity of women's participation in politics, but it had to be defined by law.

In our party, there is great consideration for the active participation of women in political life. After all, we have demonstrated this by the fact that we have an organizational form such as the Women's Alliance, which, in my opinion, acts very proactively on the social and political scene. The statute, that is, the program acts, it is prescribed what the Alliance of Women does, and it is made up of women from all over Montenegro, from all municipal committees, and its work is also visible in the media space. The emphasis should always be on the communication of the Alliance of Women, both with the media and with the civil sector, because this is a new component that this convocation of the Alliance has introduced in its work, and there has already been a successful model of cooperation, both with the international factor and with the civil sector. The Women's Alliance is a solid pillar of our politics, and this is confirmed, among other things, by our candidate list with over 40% women. We did not want to talk only about quotas, but about the fact that women are really represented

in political life with the aim of offering a new quality to the dynamics of political changes in Montenegro, that is, the opening of democratic processes. It is shown that women make a special contribution to the construction of these processes by participating in politics. This was seen in the previous period, when a Women's Club functioned in the Parliament of Montenegro, in which we had a co-president – Vesna Pavićević, as well as women from our club who were represented in that Women's Club. I had the opportunity to notice that there it was easier for them to reach a consensus on certain issues than, in general, that we in the Assembly succeeded in reaching solutions to important issues that burden Montenegrin society through dialogue. The goal of that club was to come up with legislative initiatives through this cooperation, which would enable easier access and resolution of certain challenges that were a significant burden on Montenegrin society. This has been seen through a series of legal initiatives that may need some refinement, but a good model has been given and I see an opportunity and a chance for women's participation there.

As for the Democratic Party of Socialists, we are always guided by what implies additional quality, and I am not comparing quality between the sexes, far from it. I think that the women in DPS in every place, whether in the Assembly or outside it, at all gatherings showed a high level of responsibility towards what are national interests and showed that they can, are able to and know how to lead certain processes. Therefore, as far as DPS is concerned, in the coming period there will be full support for affirmation in terms of the representation of women on the lists, but also for the economic empowerment of women in Montenegro.

CCE: What has the experience shown so far, do women manage to cross the defined ideological and party frameworks when it is necessary to vote for some law that is of importance to all of them equally? Do they unite then and find a compromise?

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: It seems to me that they are succeeding. And in the previous two convocations, we saw that women can unite about some important issues. For example, about the Alimony Fund or about the Criminal Code, etc. All this was organized with the aim of reaching a legal solution that will prevent the challenges which the Montenegrin society is facing, but also to act on the consequences that have arisen in the meantime. Could some of these legal solutions have been better defined with better communication with representatives of the executive power? Surely they are. It was shown, at some point, that there is a difficult implementation of certain legal solutions, but there is no doubt that it is a good intention and a good practice of associating women within the Assembly for the sake of some normative activity that addresses some of the challenging issues.

CCE: What is the environment for the political participation of women within your party/coalition and are women given enough space to express their views within your party/coalition? Do women also show more initiative for inclusion?

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: The initiative exists. Now, in this convocation, the head of the Women's Alliance is Drita Lola, who comes from Ulcinj, and had experience in the civil sector, in addition to the very respectable knowledge she acquired in Montenegro and outside Montenegro, and she shows a serious approach as far as issues of the position of women in Montenegrin society. Secondly, as for the initiative of women in DPS, it has never been lacking, there has always been a high level of initiative, and it is continuously increasing. It is even increasing in terms of the space that DPS Women's Alliance occupies in the media space, as well as the scope of the issues it deals with. Regarding the representation of women, we had the opportunity to see that women were a comprehensive part of certain committees in leading positions, and in the previous convocation it was Daliborka Pejović, who headed the Committee for Corruption.

Issues of gender equality are the focus of the Committee for Gender Equality, but more can be said about it

within the framework of certain seminars, sessions, within the framework of what the NGO provides to the social and public scene by organizing various events, and women from DPS always actively participate and especially in cooperation with international organizations in Montenegro with which there is excellent cooperation.

CCE: *Has the party ever, especially for these parliamentary elections, run a campaign on this issue, has there been an attempt within the party to more strongly publicize and advocate this issue?*

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: During this campaign, the focus was on economic issues for most political subjects. However, part of these economic issues also related to female entrepreneurship, that is, the economic empowerment of women, and that was a special part of our program. It seems to me that we, where we managed local self-governments, gave special encouragement to female entrepreneurship. I have an insight into how things work in certain local governments and how a successful story can be created from that level. A successful story in terms of creating that program, allocating funds, supporting business ideas, and I was convinced that women have many quality ideas that they eventually put into action. You can sometimes have a good idea that you cannot implement, but what I had the opportunity to see at the level of local self-governments, even though it involves modest means, is that it is possible to reach a concrete goal with those modest means. So, we were also dedicated to the economic empowerment of women. On the other hand, communication about gender equality is certainly always in focus. We had a series of events in the previous period, which the public is aware of, and which worried everyone. This is not a political but a broader social issue that must be solved systematically, and perhaps this campaign lacked adequate media coverage of that part of our program, as well as the parts about violence against women and peer violence. We have it in the program, but it is possible that we did not communicate it well enough in relation to the topics that dominated.

CCE: *CCE's research also shows that in the media, only 2% of the time and space in the current campaign is devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment? Why is that so?*

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: Economic issues are in the focus of the public's attention, and this is not a surprise, because everyone wonders nowadays what their standard of living and quality of life will be like. However, it is not just earnings, pensions and social benefits that make up the quality of life. There are also issues of what education, health, and cultural environment will be like, and in all this there is also the issue of gender equality and the participation of women in politics, as well as violence against women, etc. It was not just about gaining political points, but probably most parties focused on that part of the program that was primarily of public interest, with the indication that it could probably have been talked about more in this campaign. I heard remarks and criticisms related to human rights and freedoms, but also to these issues, that is, that little was said about it during the campaign. We could have imposed a different pace, but there was no lack of conversation on that topic. It is possible that we did not present it well in the media. I can confirm this as someone who is the leader of this coalition list, that this was heard from my colleagues who dealt with these issues and sent these messages. The media's interest was focused on economic issues, and as for this segment of the story, we could have paid more attention to it, but in the coming period we have the opportunity to correct ourselves.

CCE: *In the last few years, hate speech, misogynist, sexist comments and negative campaigns directed towards women in political and public life have been particularly pronounced. Although our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, a certain shift was achieved in that part, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties. However, almost only women came to the defence of their colleagues. Why is this so and don't men see a problem in it?*

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: I also followed that part because it also referred to various types of disqualifications at the expense of female colleagues who come from the party to which I belong. We had several media reactions on that topic, as well as on the account of female colleagues from other parties who were in the Parliament, that is, in public life. I cannot agree with the assessment that there is no male empathy or that there is no solidarity, I think it is more about showing that solidarity that is established at the level of the Assembly, even though what I have followed through the work of the Women's Club, the reaction has always been adequate, suitable for the given moment and very efficient. As for the reactions of colleagues who were in the Assembly or outside, it seems to me that there was support in the sense that as a society we will not take a step forward, at least when we talk about democratic processes, if we continue to spread hatred, or stick labels and disqualifications at the expense of women involved in politics.

This is something that must be removed from public discourse. Everyone must ask themselves when they write any comments or create texts in the media space about the integrity and dignity of a certain person, especially because in public discourse, not a single superfluous word should be omitted in any sense. Everything can be said appropriately and in the way that home upbringing dictates to a person, and not by sticking some negative labels or disqualifications, due to political differences, which one should deal with now in the media space. I think that those who create such content, as well as those who transmit such content, bear equal responsibility. Such contents should not be given space on the media scene. We have social networks that are completely open, and everyone can express their opinion, in a democratic society there is nothing controversial, but the problem arises when it becomes an encroachment on other people's rights and freedoms, and when it goes beyond the zone of insults, even into the zone of threats. This is where we come to the problem where the part of the legislation provides for criminal or misdemeanour liability.

I know that some colleagues from the club of representatives initiated criminal proceedings against persons who communicated not only insults, but even serious threats, and today the competent state authorities act accordingly. It seems to me that it has all been reduced to misdemeanour liability, but that is not enough. The sanction exists to deter someone from committing a misdemeanour or criminal offense. But is the essence only in the sanctions, in the punishments prescribed by our laws? I don't think so. I think the goal is the emancipation of society. We have gradually entered the process of emancipation of Montenegrin society and this will continue, and it will also depend on us as bearers of public words and public functions in the sense of how we behave on the public stage and in political life.

We, DPS, are often criticized for not being quick in our answers, for not being strong when communicating our argumentation. And that's not because we don't have the courage to say something in different words, but so that people would draw a certain lesson from our words, in order to emancipate the Montenegrin public because we are a mirror of those who listen to us and vote, who trust us to represent them, whether in the legislative or executive power, we are representatives of citizens who should take care, first of all, of their address and that everyone bears part of the responsibility in that part.

It seems to me that this responsibility was lacking in the previous period, and I believe that everyone must take care to communicate something without sensationalism and without sticking labels, and that you can gain some political point or greater media attention by preserving the one across the way you. In my opinion, this is the essence, not only in politics but in life in general. This is where we came to the problem where there is serious satanization, demonization of women in politics, sticking these labels and it is not easy for women to deal with it.

CCE: How does that affect them?

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: Well, it has a negative effect, because such comments are not accidental. We are probably still not at a sufficient level of democratic maturity to accept that everyone has their own way of thinking and their own angle of seeing a certain social or political situation. I think that the women in Montenegro who are engaged in politics are brave and that these comments do not deter them from engaging in politics. But it is possible that this type of satanization can also be a disincentive for some women. That's why, if we don't work together, in continuity, which is a long process, to bring the situation on the political scene to that level, that there are differences and that everything that exists as a difference can be communicated in an argumentative, cultural and educated manner and that respects the opinion, ideology and program principle of the other person opposite us, if we do not adopt this as a general principle of action and functioning in politics, then it will not be good. Strengthening the participation of women in politics does not mean providing a certain space in terms of quotas or certain places in terms of leadership or management of some processes but means providing an environment in which everyone will feel comfortable enough to communicate what they think.

CCE: *When it comes to the representation of women on the candidate lists, 41% of the list of your coalition is women, and only one list had about 60% of women, while the majority only tried to fulfil the legal minimum of 30%. Did you have any problems with that, and did the women themselves express a desire to be there in this issue?*

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: Of course. As I said, there has never been a lack of initiative as far as DPS is concerned. We have, and have had before, a quality club of women from our club of deputies, these are recognized women in public and political life. From that point of view, we did have a problem in terms of conceiving the list, I regret that there was not more space on the list that we would have allocated for the participation of women. This is an important question, not because of quotas, but there is the content and the essence because women are proactive, they want to engage in politics, they want to change the environment through participation in lists or participation in politics, to give a personal contribution and seal to these changes and the maturing of the democratic Montenegrin society. Our challenge was therefore exactly the opposite, we could make two or three more lists. I have no dilemma, and I am again talking about the essence, not about quotas, that their further participation will depend exclusively on the initiative of women and their motives and their wishes, because the doors of the DPS are completely open, we always talk about these problems, we now have enough space in in the coming period to put things in order and to increase the participation of women in politics and on electoral lists.

CCE: *The number of women in the Assembly does not increase from convocation to convocation, and we will see what the next convocation will bring. Are we moving forward as a society in this sense, are we maturing?*

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: I, again, look at things a little more optimistically. I think we are gradually moving forward. It all depends on the approach and how the parties look at it. I can say about the DPS that we are an emancipatory party, no matter how one looks at it politically and no matter how one looks at the DPS, we are an emancipatory party that has never made a decision in state politics in order for the public to like that decision. We tried to emancipate Montenegrin society with our decisions, which were by no means easy in the previous period. I don't need to remind you what Montenegrin society looked like maybe 15 years ago, or less, when the first Pride was organized, how challenging it was, so we see that gradually and with the passage of time, positive developments are taking place. We do not know how things will look in the future Parliament and in the executive power, but there may be some trends that indicate that things are not moving forward. I look at it, however, from a more optimistic side, although there is this type of deficiency, then it is an additional obligation to correct it, for us as actors on the political scene. Secondly, it is the duty of women to impose

an additional pace of change on the political scene, which will contribute to their greater participation in all political subjects, including in the Parliament and in the executive power. In this previous convocation, we had a woman at the head of the Assembly, which, in that sense, was a certain shift. I think that progress should be viewed fundamentally and qualitatively, and not formally in terms of quotas, this is not a question of who is ahead and who is behind, we are all in the same line and we are all equal, it is a society of equal opportunities that will provide equal opportunities to men and women according to their qualities to impose themselves in that society.

CCE: What role do party leaders play in empowering women?

DANIJEL ŽIVKOVIĆ: Leaders have an important role in the whole process, if we are talking about increasing the participation of women in politics. We must start from the environment, together, as leaders of the subjects, we must contribute to make that environment better. Out of these 15 candidate lists, one was headed by a woman, so we must get involved additionally in the affirmation of what is the motive of women to participate in politics, we must essentially dedicate ourselves to it. What it means? That we don't gather for the sake of order, that we discuss some issues in those forums and that in the end we leave those forums or meetings without some conclusions that will have their result. We need to set it as work, order, result, then that result must be. So, if we noticed that we have fewer women in the decision-making or decision-bringing process, which is one of the challenges facing the Montenegrin society, then we should jointly see to change that. It is possible that it is an increase in quotas in the law when already political subjects do not want to work on these issues themselves ... We did it, not because of any quotas, but we could make two or three lists with all women on those lists, which would be as successful as this one, or maybe even more successful. I am not saying this on the level of some political declarative or platitudes, but because the role of the leader is to trace that process in one party, to strengthen the role of the forum or alliance of women in the parties in particular. It seems to me that most parties have women's forums in their composition and that through this they affirm the participation of women in politics, and when we come to the moment of deciding how to proceed, that is, where women could find participation in the coming period, then definitely give them a chance to be in the process of making decisions from certain positions. That is essentially the role of those at the head of the list or party - to empower women by giving them the opportunity to be decision-makers in our society.

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ, list leader of Europe now!

CCE: Does your political party recognize the importance of gender equality, women's political participation and women's empowerment? If so, how does it manifest itself in the party/movement? Are these questions now or were they on the official agenda of the movement?

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: Absolutely, that issue is among our priorities. We realized that this is one of the reasons why Montenegro is an economically backward country - due to the poor or inadequate participation of women in the economy, and the insufficient utilization of that segment, the human resource, which is neglected and completely unfair, due to some traditional, patriarchal, or other reasons. We think there is great potential for economic and overall social progress, through the economic activation of that part of the population in an adequate way, by opening opportunities for young people and women with experience, who can contribute a lot to the economic and social development of Montenegro.

CCE: Where do you see the reasons for the low representation of women in political life and in leadership positions?

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: I think there are several reasons. One of them is that traditional mentality, which is changing, but not fast enough. The second is perhaps that the Montenegrin political scene is a bit sensationalist. In such a constellation of things, those more aggressive policies and sensationalistic messages are better heard and seen, and are better conveyed by the media, which probably have their own interest in wanting more sensations because they are more widely read. In some sense, this may not suit women too well, and it seems that men manage better in such a space... And the third thing, definitely the political scene should be much more based on facts, on some things that are progressive, productive, which are constructive, etc., and I am convinced that then they would have a much higher percentage of interested women to give their contribution, but also a greater interest not only of women but also of men who are professional, who care about their image, their integrity. Now we have a big problem because a lot of talented people don't want to get involved in the political scene, and this applies to both women and men. Simply, due to such a large volume of discredits, both personal and professional and of any other nature, we also have a low participation of quality staff in general on the political scene in Montenegro.

CCE: *When we talk about this kind of discrediting of women, a big problem is the growing hate speech that has been strongly represented in Montenegro towards this part of the population in recent years. For the local elections in October 2022, CCE also conducted media monitoring of the elections from a gender perspective. Even then, female candidates from the Europe Now list were exposed to such content, especially on social networks, comments with offensive content, hate speech, etc. How do you see it?*

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: That's right, they were heavily targeted.

CCE: *Is it discouraging, does it make them demotivated to get involved in the political scene?*

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: Absolutely, because women have that extra pressure, with all the discrediting that is going on, for each of us, who is on the political scene, they must "prove" themselves additionally. That kind of burden has been completely unfairly placed on them. I think that this is something that was inherited in Montenegro, and I hope that we will change it in the coming period.

CCE: *CCE's research also shows that only 2% of the media's time and space during the campaign is devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. What should the parties and their leaders do to talk more about this and make these issues part of the party's campaign and agenda?*

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: I think that it is the role of leaders to direct the work on these issues somewhere, and to lead both their party and their country by directing the narrative, and to set things as they should be and in a fair way. I think that everyone who wants to be a leader in public life should keep in mind such an untapped female potential for our country, and it is currently completely unused.

CCE: *As I mentioned, the findings of the monitoring show that these issues did not find their place in the current campaign for the parliamentary elections. Why is it like that?*

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: I'm back to that sensationalism again. It is very difficult to push some progressive and constructive topics into the media, without any desire to criticize them. But, objectively speaking, there is a lot of space there as far as public discourse is concerned. No matter how much we emphasize these topics, for some reason they remain invisible, and you have to "bury yourself" in some of our statements to be able to reach them. I highlight them often, but the media simply don't report it, because I guess it's not considered interesting enough for readers or viewers, unfortunately. And I think that's a mistake. I think that the media must

participate much more in this and recognize the social interest and not just the desire for clickbait profit, or whatever their motivation is.

CCE: *On the electoral list for the parliamentary elections, Europe Now had 35% women. In that part, when creating the list, did you face any kind of challenge, or did women show interest and initiative to have their name on it? Were they encouraged?*

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: We had a big problem in that part. Simply, the local committees (since we are a new party) had the right to propose candidates, although they were reminded to have some balance between women and men. You can imagine that there were 90% men and 10% women, and then we really had to, both myself and the whole team, seriously emphasize, insist, and persevere to the end that women must get more light and more chances, space, etc., which eventually happened.

Can that percentage be better? It definitely can and will be better in the future.

CCE: *Will there be more women in decision-making positions?*

MILOJKO SPAJIĆ: Absolutely.

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ, list leader of SDP – For our house

CCE: *Does your political party recognize the importance of gender equality, women's political participation and women's empowerment? If so, how does it manifest itself in the party?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: The Social Democratic Party values the issue of gender equality. This is also the only parliamentary party that had a woman president and a woman candidate for president at its head. Women within SDP have a special form of organization through the Women's Forum, which has various educational programs for members, which significantly contributes to their empowerment.

However, as our society is still deeply patriarchal, the path to positions of power is much more difficult for women than for men, because the necessary support from family and society is largely absent, and male party colleagues are generally not motivated to contribute to the equal participation of women in political participation, because they rarely gender-conscious. As local authorities, we also decided to finance children's stay in kindergartens, which is one of the logistics for easier inclusion of women in political life.

CCE: *How do you rate the low representation of women in political life and decision-making positions?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: We are witnessing various phenomena in our society that discourage women from engaging in politics. Misogyny and sexism are also present in the Parliament of Montenegro. Such phenomena discourage women from engaging in politics. And it is not enough to publicly verbally condemn the bearers of such activities, mechanisms should be found to establish other forms of responsibility for the unscrupulous behaviour of individuals who want to disparage and discourage even those women who are very successful in politics and whose results can have a motivating effect on other women to become politically active.

CCE: *Are these issues (general issues of gender equality and political participation of women, but also their cultural, social, sexual and reproductive rights, economic empowerment, fight against violence against women, etc.) now/or have they ever been on the official agenda of your political party?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: The Women's Forum of the SDP continuously deals with these issues. Now, the current issue is "menstrual poverty", whose main advocate is the first female member of parliament on our list.

CCE: *Has the party ever, especially for these parliamentary elections, run a campaign on this issue, has there been an attempt within the party to more strongly publicize and advocate this issue?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: In the previous parliamentary elections, we ran a campaign whose main slogan was "Strong woman - strong Montenegro", so the gender dimension was visible throughout the campaign. We also had billboards with that message, but no one commented on it, not even from the non-governmental sector. The issue of menstrual poverty is included in our political program, which proves that we have not neglected issues of gender equality. However, we cannot say that we devote enough space to gender equality.

CCE: *Who in the party initiates these issues - the women themselves or their male colleagues?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Issues of gender equality are always initiated by women. Men believe that they do it well and the initiative is left to women. Topics that are of a general nature have priority.

CCE: *Why are these questions of a more general nature a priority?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: I have already pointed out that we also tried such an approach, and that it did not resonate with the public, so it could not bring political points. Now economic topics have priority, that is, the public is most interested in it, and even the populist story from the economic sphere has a greater resonance than the problem of violence against women, domestic violence, or even the problem of peer violence, which has recently been recognized as a wider social problem.

CCE: *Is your party aware of the obstacles faced by women who are or want to be part of public life and occupy certain positions in politics and society?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: We are certainly aware of certain aspects, because as a party we have encountered these problems. We reacted publicly to obvious violations of women's human rights. In the last presidential elections, the current president of the country called our presidential candidate a "political marginal", and there have been similar examples before. However, this is only one type of obstacle. Women traditionally have more responsibilities in the family than men, and this is perceived as a personal problem, not a social one. In addition, women are statistically more educated than men. A greater number of them complete master's and doctoral studies, but all this is not enough for equal representation in decision-making positions.

CCE: *What is the environment for the political participation of women within your party and are women within your party given enough space to express their views?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: The SDP also by statute allows for the right to a different opinion, and no one can bear the consequences for that. Nevertheless, men are more dominant in imposing topics and in defending positions because various techniques of dominance are closer to men than to women. Women give up more easily because of "peace at home".

CCE: *What have you done, within the party, and now as a list leader, to motivate/inspire/encourage women to get more involved and speak out publicly?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: First, I have an affirmative attitude towards the political involvement of women in politics and I think it is very important that public figures constantly affirm such an attitude in public to encourage as many women as possible. There is many women in my team, and it will be like that in the future. I will always stand up for the protection of women's rights to be free to do the work they want, and with my public appearances I will always protect women regardless of political orientation, because I think that we are still, unfortunately, at such a social stage that we must first crystallize the attitudes of public officials so that the whole society would gradually progress. First, let's start with the elementary things - our personal attitudes, and then let's jointly regulate the legislative and overall social environment.

CCE: Does your party organize any trainings, leadership trainings and seminars or otherwise educate its membership on gender equality and related issues?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: There are plenty of training and educational programs of various kinds. The trainings are organized by the Forum of Women and International Actors (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, IRI). Women are ready to work on improvement. According to my information, they are also working on a strategic plan that they believe will improve their positioning in the party, but it is currently on hiatus due to activities in the previous and this campaign.

CCE: What strength and influence does your party's Women's Forum have?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: The Forum has an important role in gender issues. Women are organized into local forums and mutually networked with the Women's Forum at the central level. They successfully build mutual trust and support. However, not all local organizations are equally strong. I recognize a special strength in the Women's Forum of Cetinje, Podgorica and Plav. Their activism is of great importance for SDP.

CCE: In the largest number of cases, on all 15 electoral lists for the upcoming parliamentary elections, women are represented almost to the minimum extent required by law. Why is it like that?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Montenegrin society is still deeply patriarchal, which means that men are in charge, not only in the home, but also on the political scene. It is good that the law defined the necessary representation of women, at least 30% of candidates, that is, at least one woman among every four candidates, and if it were not for that, women would be less represented on the electoral lists.

CCE: Why weren't there more women on your list?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: For the same reasons as on the other lists. Men are simply more dominant and more persistent in fighting for their positions. Gender awareness is not our strong point, although we, as a social democratic party, should be the vanguard in this matter as well, but this did not happen in these elections either.

CCE: In your opinion, what are the mechanisms for greater inclusion of women in politics, and for strengthening female leadership in politics, and where do you see the biggest obstacle?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Unfortunately, nothing without legal solutions that will increase the quotas and ensure a better distribution of women on the lists. In addition, it would be good if men and women were educated together on gender issues, because it is obvious that men are not easily given positions of power.

CCE: Why don't we have more female leaders?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Women become leaders with huge efforts and sacrifices, this rule does not apply to men. A woman as a leader is under the scrutiny of the public, starting from her appearance, through the narrative and all the way to her effects in the position she covers. Society has imposed a much higher standard for a female leader than for a male leader. In addition, accompanying phenomena such as misogyny and sexism further demotivate women to fight for leadership. No one will comment on the way a man dresses, even if, for example, it was inappropriate at a certain moment, while a woman must always be up to the task to avoid certain inconveniences. Bad public discourse is much harder to forgive for a woman than for a man. We simply live in a social context where it is much more difficult to be a leader than a leader.

CCE: *Do you think that among the voters themselves there are so-called voting sexism, that is, the phenomenon in which voters will vote for men rather than women, and if so, why is that so?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: We are all voters and there is no major difference between what is the public scene and what we will do when we decide who to vote for, except that the anachronism in the matter of choosing who to vote for is more intense among the majority of the electorate, because the traditional is still ahead of the contemporary and modern understanding of women and their role in society and politics.

CCE: *How is this awareness changing among voters?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Media is one of the key mechanisms. Women need media support. Editorial policy, at least on public service, must address the issue of greater presence of women in the media and define standards that will contribute to gender equality. It happens that some media encourage misogyny and sexism by publishing certain content. This is where the state must intervene through legal solutions. Educational content in the formal system should be oriented towards raising awareness of gender issues from pre-school age onwards, through all other educational cycles.

CCE: *Research shows that women are more trusted when it comes to areas such as education, health, upbringing, social policies, and men in areas such as national security, fighting crime, defence, etc. Do you think that this should be changed and professional and qualified women should be appointed to these positions, and how would we destroy such stereotypes?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Research only confirms stereotypes. I do not support such an approach because in that way we would deepen stereotypes, and we need to eradicate them. I don't think that the gender dimension profiles someone more for doing a certain job just because he is a man or a woman. These are programs deeply rooted in our heads that need to be erased, but it cannot be done with the push of a button. These are processes that will last and that will depend on the overall democratization of society and that will oscillate.

CCE: *How can men within parties contribute and what actions should they take to increase the level of women's political participation?*

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Gender equality does not always progress equally, there are setbacks and bright moments, and this is no stranger to our party. But a continuous struggle for a better positioning of women in the party is necessary. Certain affirmative actions in favour of women could give the desired result. For example, leadership of local committees, representation in party bodies at the central level (Presidency and Main Committee) could actually solve the problem of better positioning of women in decision-making positions in the party. After the parliamentary elections, we will have a Congress and, I hope, it could go in that direction.

CCE: Until now, within your party, have you had any developed strategies that men would address to reduce this gender disparity and promote female participation?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Unfortunately, we did not deal with this problem. According to my knowledge, women are working on a strategy that will position them better in the party.

CCE: In the last few years, hate speech, misogynistic, sexist comments and negative campaigns directed towards women in political and public life have been particularly pronounced. Although our research shows that in the first days of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, certain progress was made in that area, some media continued to run dirty campaigns against several women from different parties. However, almost only women came to the defence of their colleagues. Why is this so and don't men see a problem with it?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Public verbal condemnation of hate speech, misogynistic comments and negative campaigns are not enough to prevent or minimize such occurrences. Such behaviour of individuals and the media that promote it should be sanctioned by the state. It is good that women publicly condemn such behaviour and comment on it as unacceptable, but it is not good that men do not do the same. I am not a supporter of the maxim that everything is allowed in politics, and I really deeply condemn it, although I have not spoken out about it.

CCE: CCE's research also shows that in the media, only 2% of the time and space in the current campaign is devoted to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment? Why do you think that is so?

NIKOLA ĐURAŠKOVIĆ: Parties evaluate which topics are important for the further progress of society and what they can offer potential voters through the campaign, according to the available human resources and the resources of society. We approached this campaign in such a way. Problems in education, health, agriculture, and other economic issues have priority in this campaign, because we have the best solutions for them. All these issues, especially education and health, also include the gender dimension, but it has not been singled out as a priority.

Recommendations for media reporting on women in electoral processes

1. Equal treatment implies that female candidates are treated in the same way in the media as male candidates. The media must avoid any discrimination, sexist comments, or stereotypes that could damage the integrity and dignity of women in politics;
2. In their reporting during the electoral campaign, the media should present the electoral programme and political goals of all candidates equally, regardless of gender. Among other things, this includes focusing on the political platform of electoral lists and the candidates who represent it, rather than the appearance of a woman in politics or her marital status, and the like;
3. The media should ensure approximately equal participation of women and men in interviews, debates, statements, and comments, which could act as a stimulus for women in politics to present their political views in public debates;
4. Reporting on the topics of gender inequality, challenges, prejudices, negative examples and bad practices faced by women in politics can raise public awareness and better position the importance of women's participation in the political life of Montenegro;
5. Sensational reporting on women in politics that encourages stereotypes and negative perceptions of women must be eliminated and publicly highlighted as a negative example of media coverage. The media should focus on informing about political issues of public importance that women discuss;
6. Non-governmental organizations and the media should strengthen the capacities of journalists (workshops, seminars, etc.), to improve their understanding of gender equality issues in order to contribute to more sensitive reporting on women in politics;
7. The media should engage must in self-critical review through regular evaluations of their reporting on women in politics to adhere more to the principles of gender equality. Internal media self-regulation mechanisms can help a lot in this regard;
8. All actors should recognize and emphasize more often in their public appearances the importance of full inclusion and equality of women and men in the democratization of society. More work should be done within parties on gender awareness, starting with the importance of non-stereotyped portrayal of female figures in public space to the obstacles that stand in the

way of equal inclusion of women in political decision-making;

- 9.** Actors of the election campaign themselves, primarily female candidates and leaders, should better use the media and public space available to them for marketing their own political or general messages that can strengthen citizens' awareness of gender equality, especially the political participation of women. There is also room for educating members of political parties about the importance of using gender-sensitive language in media appearances, and using those public appearances more effectively;
- 10.** Non-governmental organizations should monitor media reporting and activities on social networks to contribute to the education and professionalization of journalists. They should also limit misogynistic statements on social networks by establishing communication with the moderators of those networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).



