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Draft study on media coverage of elections with a specific focus on gender equality

Fourth revised draft as of 14 November 2017

Introduction

In the terms of reference for the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) for the biennium 2016 – 2017, the Committee of Ministers asked the CDMSI to "carry out a feasibility study on a possible standard-setting instrument on media coverage of elections, with particular regard to gender equality and the use of the internet in elections" and approved the committee of experts on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership (MSI-MED) as a subordinate structure to facilitate the work of the CDMSI. The composition of the MSI-MED appears in the Appendix.

In its first meeting on 22 – 23 March 2016, the expert committee decided to deal separately with the two components of the study, namely the use of the internet in electoral campaigns and gender equality in the context of media coverage of elections. Ms Maja Zarić and Mr Pierre François Docquir were appointed as Rapporteurs for the preparation of the feasibility study on media coverage of elections with a specific focus on gender equality. Furthermore, the expert committee appointed Ms Pamela Morinière as external expert to provide special expertise on gender issues and portrayal of women (politicians and candidates) in the media.

Subsequently it was decided in the CDMSI Bureau and confirmed by the MSI-MED to omit from the titles of the studies the mention "feasibility" and the references to standard-setting instruments, given the open-ended conclusions of the studies and the need to obtain more comparative information before deciding on what specific follow-up to give to them.

Objectives of the study

A few months before the election of Germany's Federal Chancellor in 2005, Reinhold Beckmann, host of popular Beckmann show on German public service broadcaster ARD presented CDU candidate Angela Merkel with a photograph of American actor Brad Pitt. He asked: "*What do you think of him? He is single now, he just got divorced from his wife*". Surprised, Angela Merkel responded "*Do I really need to comment?"[1].* There are no accounts from the same period of Ms Merkel's European male counterparts having been asked questions about that, or any other celebrity divorce. The question which arises – especially since this is by no means an isolated case of a gender specific question – is whether, and if so, to what extent, media coverage of politics, particularly during the election periods, is framed by the participants' gender, and whether that influences the electoral outcome.

An equal and fair participation of women and men in political debate is a fundamental to democracy. At a time where many European legislations have adopted policies that directly promote women candidates, often through voluntary or mandatory quota systems, more women have decided to run for office. For instance, in the 2014 European Parliament elections, women won 37% seats, a 2% increase since 2009 elections, 6 points more than in 2004.

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[1] Portraying Politics- a toolkit on gender and television, Beckmann, ARD, 10.01.05.

Elections are a period of intense media scrutiny. Voters will rely tremendously on the news to forge their opinion and vote. They must have enough information about candidates to make informed choices in the ballot booth. It is therefore essential that all candidates have equal access to the media and are portrayed in a fair and accurate way. Media coverage of elections is thus crucial for the public, civil society, state institutions and political parties, but also for private, nongovernmental sector, and international community. By providing access to political candidates to convey their messages to the public, the media has an essential role as the primary source of information about politics and elections.

Traditional media so far remain the main source of information during election. However, they are facing increasing competition from the new media, particularly social media, which provide faster access to various types of content. Online media of all sorts have enabled politicians to express themselves, without there necessarily being journalists' gate keeping.

A free press, delivered from bias reporting and respectful of society's diversity and equality between women and men has the capacity to deliver citizens knowledge to make informed decisions and fully participate in the public debate. On the contrary, a press that avoids portraying a part of society or presents one part of the society in a stereotyped manner has the potential to damage not only the persons it portrays, but also viewers and readers' perception of that category of persons or group. For example, the growing influence of infotainment where sensationalism often wins over information means that political candidates will not only be confronted to traditional political debates and news reports but will also participate in programmes where political questions are mixed with entertaining ones.

The Platform for Action adopted at the fourth World conference on women held in Beijing in 1995 included specific provisions on the media and acknowledged the part that they can play in promoting gender equality, in women's access to decision-making processes and in combating stereotyped portrayals of women[2].

Numerous studies have highlighted the lack of equality and fairness in the media coverage of women and men. Globally, women only make 24% of the persons read, seen or viewed in the news[3]. This constitutes a great deficit given that women represent half of the world population[4].

Research has shown that when a man enters public life, media usually don't pay attention to the fact that he is a man. When a woman runs for office, her gender is almost always a focus of debate[5]. Research has also highlighted that women politicians are proportionally

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[2] Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action: "Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media".

[3] Global Media Monitoring Project, 2015.

[4] According to the United Nations' "The World's Women 2015 -Trends and Statistics", women constituted 49.6% of the population in 2015.

[5] Portraying Politics, a Toolkit on gender and television.

less visible than men in news coverage, and that where they are present media tend to portray them in a biased way, using stereotypes or discriminating against them[6].

As a consequence, unbalanced and unfair media coverage of gender during elections can be expected to impact the public's understanding of electoral stakes and influence gender balance in the result of electoral competitions.

This study explores how male and female politicians are portrayed in the media during electoral campaigns and to what extent the representation of gender during elections influences voters' decisions. It consists of a review of existing research reports and an overview of current practices in the member states of the Council of Europe. The study provides an evidence-based approach to assessing whether (a) existing legal instruments offer an appropriate framework to promoting gender equality in relation with media coverage of elections, and (b) the national implementation of those instruments is effective and delivers any results. The study takes into account the evolution of media landscapes and adopts a broad definition of media that includes social media among other new actors, in conformity with Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)7 of the Committee of Ministers on a new notion of media. It covers mainly news and general affairs programmes, but will also look at entertainment programmes where relevant for electoral campaigns.

Part I – Legal instruments of the Council of Europe

The topic of the study sits at the intersection of the right to freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 10 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (hereinafter "the Convention") and the prohibition of discrimination enshrined in Article 14 of the Convention.

Most of the existing legislation regulating media content is aimed at protecting diversity; it rarely addresses any specific topics such as gender equality. Moreover, such regulation is mainly aimed at audio-visual services[7]. Nevertheless, some recent instruments of the Council of Europe address certain aspects of the issue in question.

1. Recommendation CM/Rec (2013) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on gender equality and media

This Recommendation reaffirms the importance of the gender dimension to media pluralism and diversity of media content, considering that media are a crucial factor in shaping society's perceptions and ideas. The preamble identifies a number of problems in this area, notably women's under-representation in media ownership, in information production and journalism, in newsrooms and management posts, and their often precarious conditions of employment. Moreover, the text flags women's low visibility, both in terms of quality and quantity, in media content, the scarce presence of women as experts and the relative

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[6] Portraying Politics, a toolkit on gender and television.

[7] Handbook on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec (2013) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on gender equality in Media.

absence of their viewpoints in the media. The Recommendation also specifically alerts to the persistence of sexist stereotypes and lack of counter-stereotypes in the media coverage of political events and electoral campaigns.

The Recommendation calls upon the member states to improve the situation by adopting appropriate legal frameworks to prohibit discrimination and ensure that they are implemented by media regulators. Secondly, the media are urged to adopt self-regulatory measures and internal codes of conduct to promote equal representation of women and men in media work, in media management bodies and in regulatory and self-regulatory institutions, and to promote a non-stereotyped image, role and visibility of women and men.

The guidelines identify mechanisms that may support the promotion of gender equality, in particular the adoption of indicators on gender equality in the media, regular monitoring of the situation, additional research on gender equality, and the exchange of information on good practices. Finally, efforts in media literacy are necessary to promote gender equality for the young generations as well as for adults, including media professionals and media students.[8]

2. Recommendation CM/Rec (2011)7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states on a new notion of media

This recommendation looks at the evolution of media landscapes and finds that it is necessary to analyse the various functions performed by internet intermediaries and social media in order to identify the appropriate graduated approach to their regulation. The Recommendation also insists that it is important to identify the potential risks as well as the opportunities that arise in the new media landscapes to further promote gender equality and diversity in the media.

3. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns

This Recommendation includes guidelines aiming at fair, balanced and impartial media coverage during electoral periods. The general provisions envisage that the editorial independence of the media must be enshrined in the regulatory framework of all member states and should be fully respected. It is particularly important for the public service media to cover elections in an impartial manner and without discriminating against or supporting a specific political party or candidate.

In addition, fair and balanced coverage of elections is especially recommended for news and current affairs programmes in broadcast media, and all paid political advertising should be readily recognisable as such and made transparent to the public.

Lastly, the media are encouraged to develop self-regulatory frameworks and incorporate self-regulatory professional and ethical standards regarding their coverage of election campaigns including respect of principles of human dignity and non-discrimination.

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[8] See also ibid.

4. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on gender equality standards and mechanisms

This Recommendation calls for, among other steps, elimination of sexism from language and promotion of language that reflects the principle of gender equality. To this end, member states are invited to promote non-sexist language across all sectors, but particularly "in the public sector and in all forms of education and in media," and to devise initiatives for the elimination of discriminatory expressions which describe women and men in terms of their physical appearance or of the qualities and gender roles attributed to their sex.

5. Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making

This Recommendation encourages the member states to develop and support mentoring/work-shadowing programmes, confidence building, leadership and media training for women considering entering political and public decision making. Likewise, they are called upon to promote balanced participation in decision-making positions in the media, in education, training, research and regulatory bodies, as well as to support training and awareness-raising for students of journalism and media professionals on questions linked to gender equality. Finally, the member states should encourage media professionals to ensure equal visibility of women and men candidates and elected representatives in the media, especially during election periods.

6. The implementation of the existing standards of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe has put in place the Gender Equality Strategy[9] in order to support the implementation of gender equality standards. The strategic objectives of the Strategy include combatting gender stereotypes and sexism, achieving balanced participation of women and men in politics and public decision making and achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures, which include the media.

Part II – Media and gender equality

1. Data on media coverage of women and men politicians

"*News erase one in two women*" ("Les médias gomment une femme sur deux") claimed the Belgian Association of professional journalists (AJP), when it publicised its Global Media Monitoring Project[10] (GMMP)'s results for Belgium in 2015.

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[9] The Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 is currently in force, but a new one is under preparation for the period 2018-2023, to be adopted by the end of 2017.

[10] The project consists of an analysis, every five years, of the presence of women in the news across the globe. I analyses, among other, women as sources of news in politics as well as the presence of women journalists who report on political topics.

MSI-MED(2016)11rev4

The latest edition of the GMMP[11], which assess every 5 years the place of women in the news media, whether in print, radio, TV or online, brought indeed alarming results. Women made only 24% of people seen, read or heard in the news of traditional media, a similar result to the GMMP 2010 findings. The report warns that "*the rate of progress towards gender parity (in the news) has almost ground to a halt over the last 5 years*".

Findings in the digital news were almost identical. Women make 26% of the people in Internet news stories and media news-tweets combined.

As regards the category n*ews about politics, women only make 16% of the people appearing in the stories* (19% in Europe and 17% in online and Twitter news in Europe.)

Worryingly, while the presence of women sources in political stories has increased steadily since the first monitoring in 1995, it registered its first decrease in 2015.

Main Story Topics. Newspaper, Television, Radio	1995 %F	1995 %M	2000 %F	2000 %M	2005 %F	2005 %M	2010 %F	2010 %M	2015 %F	2015 %M	%Change (Δ) (%F)	
Science & Health	27	73	21	79	22	78	32	68	35	65	▲ 8	
Social & Legal	19	81	21	79	28	72	30	70	28	72	▲ 9	
Crime & Violence	21	79	18	82	22	78	24	76	28	72	▲ 7	Δ 20 yrs
Celebrity, Arts & Sport	24	76	23	77	28	72	26	74	23	77	▼ 1	
Economy	10	90	18	82	20	80	20	80	21	79	▲11	
Politics & Government	7	93	12	88	14	86	19	81	16	84	▲ 9	

Source: GMMP 2015

A number of studies on media coverage of female candidates revealed that even when there are a reasonable number of women candidates running for office they are often neglected by the media[12].

During Ireland 2011 elections, a study[13] showed that women constituted around one third of appearances on the Irish current affairs show *Prime Time*, broadcast by the Irish public broadcaster RTE, but were given only 10% of the airtime.

Looking at the *occupations of the persons that appear in the news stories*, women make 18% of the category of government, politician, minister, spokesperson and 67% of the category of homemaker, parent, where no other occupation is given.

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[11] http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/highlights/highlights_en.pdf

[12] The importance of the media to elections, ACE, the electoral knowledge network.

[13] It's a man's world, A Qualitative Study of the (Non) Mediation of Women and Politics on Prime Time During the 2011 General Election Anne O'Brien 2014.

Occupation	1995 F%	1995 M%	2000 F%	2000 M%	2005 F%	2005 M%	2010 F%	2010 M%	2015 F%	2015 M%	%Change
Homemaker, parent (no other occupation is given)	81	19	75	25	72	28			67	33	▼ 8
Health worker, social worker, childcare worker	n/a		n/a		n/a				47	53	
Office or service worker, non-management worker	35	65	40	60	45	55			35	65	▼ 5
Unemployed no other occupation given	33	67	19	81	35	65			34	66	▲15
Activist or worker in civil society org., NGO, trade union	24	76	23	77	34	66			33	67	▲10
Doctor, dentist, health specialist	n/a		n/a		n/a				30	70	
Academic expert, lecturer, teacher	n/a		n/a		n/a				23	77	
Lawyer, judge, magistrate, legal advocate, etc.	n/a		18	82	17	83			22	78	▲ 4
Media professional, journalist, film-maker, etc.	n/a		36	64	29	71			21	79	▼15
Tradesperson, artisan, labourer, truck driver, etc.	15	85	23	77	22	78			21	79	▼ 2
Government employee, public servant, etc.	12	88	17	83	17	83			20	80	▲ 3
Government, politician, minister, spokesperson...	10	90	12	88	17	83			18	82	▲ 6
Business person, exec, manager, stock broker...	n/a		12	88	14	86			16	84	▲ 4
Agriculture, mining, fishing, forestry	15	85	13	87	13	87			14	86	▲ 1
Science/ technology professional, engineer, etc.	12	88	10	90	10	90			10	90	■ 0
Police, military, para-military, militia, fire officer	4	96	5	95	7	93			8	92	▲ 3
Sportsperson, athlete, player, coach, referee	9	91	16	84	11	89			7	93	▼ 9

(Δ10 yrs)

Source: GMMP 2015

In the digital news, women are 2% points less likely to appear as spokespersons (18%) than in traditional media and two points more likely to appear as experts (21%).

When it comes to coverage of women and men in election times, i.e. in a period for which special rules are adopted by many states in order to provide fair and unbiased coverage to all candidates, the gap appears to be the same.

A study conducted by the Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), the Federal Commission for Women's Issues and Swiss public broadcaster (SRG SSR)[14], which was published in 2015, concluded that while women made up 34.5% of candidates for election to the Swiss National Council (the lower house of the Federal Assembly) in 2015, they made up 24% of audio and video stories, 23.5% of stories in print and online media and 25% of photos of candidates. Worryingly, there had been no progress in the presence of women candidates in the news since 2003 when women made up 25% of candidates in the press while representing 34.5% of candidates. The study also concluded that although there was no significant improvement in the percentage of representation of women candidates in media there was a significant improvement of their elections into functions. This fact brought out the question of correlation between the percentage representation of women candidates in media and their election. Furthermore, the study showed that the way of representing both gender was equal in terms of assigning them adjectives such as reasonable, active, strong, knowledgeable, etc. These findings might be valuable to serve as a basis for other wider analysis in more member states.

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[14] Les élections dans les médias : les stéréotypes de genre disparaissent, mais les candidats restent sous-représentées, Commentaire de la CFQF sur l'étude « Genre et médias au préalable des élections fédérales 2015, octobre 2016.

In Belgium, a 2014 report conducted by the National Audiovisual Council (CSA)[15] shows some improvements with women making up 30.38% of politicians appearing in pre-electoral debates on Belgium French-speaking television. Findings showed that women tend to be more present in local television's debates (32.05%) than in major public broadcasters (27.82%) and major private broadcasters (24.14%).

2. Reasons behind gender inequality in media coverage of women candidates

Such low representation of women can be partly explained by the low presence of women candidates and their low presence in countries' most leading political positions. In its 28 member states for instance, the EU has 4 women presidents (Croatia, Estonia, Malta and Lithuania). Similar lack of gender balance is present also in the governmental structures. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Statistics Database[16], which includes data on the numbers of women and men in key decision-making positions, in the second quarter of 2017 only four out of 35 European countries' prime ministers[17] were women. Similarly, less than 30% women were government ministers or held equivalent public offices in those 35 countries.

Nevertheless, data on women holding elected offices in European assemblies show that their presence in politics is considerably higher than their presence as sources in the news. Women represent 37% of EU Parliament, and have reached at least 35% representation in 8 EU member states (Sweden, Finland, Spain, Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, Montenegro and Denmark). In the Council of Europe member States, 25.6% of members of the lower/single houses of national parliaments are women. The number is even lower in respect of elected members of upper houses, amounting to 23.9% women parliamentarians, and somewhat higher in respect of the appointed number, where 35.8% of members are women.[18]

A higher percentage of women are present in the representative assemblies of the Council of Europe.

		Countries reaching the minimum 40% target in 2016	Average % women in 2016	Evolution 2005-2016
Parliamentary Assembly		21 (45.7%)	35.7%	+
Chamber of Local Authorities	Members	22 (46.8%)	43%	+
	Substitutes	21 (55.3%)		

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[15] La représentation des femmes dans les débats pré-électoraux télévisés belges francophones, May 2014.

[16]   http://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_gov__wmid_natgov_pres/bar/year:2017-Q2/geo:EU28,BE,BG,CZ,DK,DE,EE,IE,EL,ES,FR,HR,IT,CY,LV,LT,LU,HU,MT,NL,AT,PL,PT,RO,SI,SK,FI,SE,UK,IS,LI,NO,ME,MK,RS,TR/sex:M,W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:PRES_GOV/EGROUP:GOV_NAT/BEIS:TOT

[17] The 28 EU Member States, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

[18] Council of Europe: Third round of monitoring on the implementation of CM Recommendation Rec (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making – Analytical report of 2016 data

Chamber of Regions	Members	22 (58%)	44.8%	+
	Substitutes	24 (52.2%)		

Source: Third round of monitoring on the implementation of CM Recommendation Rec (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making – Analytical report of 2016 data

Another element which contributes to the inequality of media coverage accorded to women politicians is that heads of political parties are more likely to be interviewed and that 14.8% of those leaders are men.[19]

As reliance on sources is fundamental to news gathering, the fact that most authoritative sources, including political party leaders and spokespersons are male means they are the "primary definers" of news. As pointed in the GMMP report, "*dependence on these sources also reinforces male dominance in the news as most of these sources tend to be men*".

Nevertheless, while the lower presence of women in major political positions does account for general lower media coverage, that fact in itself does not explain why female candidates comparatively receive less media attention than their male counterparts. The reasons for such gender inequality must also be sought elsewhere.

3. Media coverage of elections from a gender perspective

During election campaigns media have a duty to publicise candidates and their manifestoes as widely as possible, regardless of their gender, while seeking to treat them equally and impartially[20].

Since most voters have no direct relations with election candidates, media and journalists have a role to play in conveying their concerns and making sure candidates address not only their own programme but also respond to the matters of public concern. Journalists have a role to play in identifying what those issues are and encourage politicians to speak about them. Among these issues is gender equality.

The latest GMMP report lists government, accidents, sports, economics and crime as the five main news topics.[21] Most of these topics fall under de category of what is called "hard news[22]". Government and domestic politics come first in the GMMP ranking of top topics. As GMMP results also show that women's presence significantly lags behind in the coverage of politics, the risk is that topics considered as "hard news" continue to be associated with men and perceived as such by public opinion and voters.

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Handbook on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec (2013) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on gender equality in Media.

[21] The high proportion of stories under the accident category is attributable to the fact that the Germanwings plane crash was reported widely on the GMMP monitoring day.

[22] As opposed to the soft news on topics such as education, healthcare, childcare, lifestyle, etc.

Top 10 news topics on the global monitoring day 25 March 2015

1.	Other domestic politics, government...
2.	Disaster, accident, famine, flood, plane crash...
3.	Sports, events, players, facilities, training, funding
4.	Economic policies, strategies, modules, indicators, stock markets...
5.	Violent crime, murder, abduction, assault...
6.	Non-violent crime, bribery, theft, drugs, corruption
7.	Foreign/international politics, UN, peacekeeping
8.	Education, childcare, nursery, university, literacy
9.	Medicine, health, hygiene, safety, (not EBOLA or HIV/AIDS)
10.	War, civil war, terrorism, other state-based violence

Source: GMMP 2015

a. Who reports on politics?

Regarding the question **who reports on and presents the news,** the GMMP 2015 shows that women outnumbered men in TV news presentation (57%) and are slightly below men in radio presentation (41%). However, men outnumber women as reporters (63%), with a higher score in newspapers (65%), television (62%) and radio (59%). However, women report 5% more stories online than in traditional media combined (42% of news published online are reported by women).

In traditional media women report 31% of stories on politics (against 50% of stories on science and health)[23]. There was a 2% decrease since 2010, making politics the least reported topic by women.

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		%Change (Δ)
	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	Change
B. Reporting and Presenting the News. Newspaper, Radio, Television											
% Stories presented	51	49	49	51	53	47	49	51	49	51	■ 0
Television			56	44	57	43	52	48	57	43	▲ 1
Radio			41	59	49	51	45	55	41	59	■ 0
% Stories reported	28	72	31	69	37	63	37	63	37	63	▲ 6
Television			36	64	42	58	44	56	38	62	▲ 2
Radio			28	72	45	55	37	63	41	59	▲13
Newspapers			26	74	29	71	33	67	35	65	▲ 9

(Δ 15 yrs)

Source: GMMP 2015

As regards the age distribution of female presenters, there is an overrepresentation of young women as anchors; the representation of women in the 50-64 age bracket is much lower (28%) and disappears beyond that age group.

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[23] GMMP 2015

Female presenters, percentage by age

	2005	2010	2015
12 and under	n/a	51%	100%
13-18	n/a	59%	82%
19-34	79%	52%	84%
35-49	50%	58%	49%
50-64	7%	51%	28%
65 years or more	n/a	57%	0%

Source: GMMP 2005-2015

b. Stories reported by female reporters by major topics 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2010	2015	Δ 15 yrs
Science and Health	46%	38%	44%	50%	▲ 4%
Economy	35%	43%	40%	39%	▲ 4%
Social and Legal	39%	40%	43%	39%	■ 0%
Celebrity, Arts and Media, Sports	27%	35%	38%	34%	▲ 7%
Crime and Violence	29%	33%	35%	33%	▲ 4%
Politics and Government	26%	32%	33%	31%	▲ 5%
TOTAL	28%	37%	37%	37%	▲ 9%

Source: GMMP 2015

This finding confirms that while a majority of politicians are men and a majority of those reporting on politics are also men, there seems to remain what scholars have highlighted as a "gentleman's club" tendency where rules are established by male politicians and male journalists[24] and which women journalists and politicians must comply with.

The GMMP points at the limited journalistic gender lens when selecting their sources and qualifies it as "*male centred, but (…) also skewed towards a certain kind of masculinity when selecting interviewees for all types of views, from 'expert' opinion to 'ordinary' person testimonies*". In this connection, it is difficult to change the habit of using interviewees, especially experts, who are already known in favour of finding new, female experts. Of course, that does not help enhancing diversity of voices. Lately, databases of female experts are beginning to emerge which counter the argument that there are none, however the practice of using those databases is yet to evolve.

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[24] "Send pretty girls to the white house"- the role of gender in journalists-politicians' interactions, Liudmila Voronova, University of Stockholm, Sweden, 2014.

Interestingly, the GMMP highlights that while women journalists tend to include more women as subject of their news stories (29%) as opposed to their male colleagues (26%), there seems to be an overall journalism practice of mainly referring to male as subject, despite some slow improvement.

Female news subject by sex of reporter 2000-2015

	2000	2005	2010	2015	Δ 15 yrs
Female reporters	24%	25%	28%	29%	▲ 5%
Male reporters	18%	20%	22%	26%	▲ 2%

Source: GMMP 2015

Online news seems slightly more balanced in using female sources where women make 33% of sources in stories by online news female reporters, compared to 23% in stories provided by men.

The fact that few journalism schools include any curricula on gender equality shows that the gender deficit applied to journalistic sources is also intrinsic to journalism education and daily routines adopted at the beginning of journalistic careers.

c. Framing the message: journalistic practices

The media have the capacity to "*direct the public's attention to certain issues presented as the most important ones at that moment*"[25]. At election times the media will decide on the guests, the topics, the format of the debate (including the setting of the room, the time, the angle of cameras and the captions that go beyond photographs.

Different factors will influence journalists when they cover news including their personal experience, their orientation (ideological, political or religious), their gender, their preferences, and their knowledge. Their specific frame of reference will inevitably influence the angle of a story[26].

The way journalists frame their questions to politicians and set debate panels influences the public's perception of politicians. The choice of questions and who will answer them also impacts on the public's perception of female and male politicians' strength and weaknesses.

"*The repetitive and persistent nature of most of the media's frames of women politicians produces a normative expectation that this is how women are, and these gender scripts slide*

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[25] Election coverage from a Gender perspective, a media monitoring manual by UN Women and Idea.

[26] Portraying Politics, a toolkit on gender and television.

easily into the journalistic consciousness to become the routine handy-grab to use for any women politician, good for one, good for all," says scholar Karen Ross[27].

One important aspect pointed by research is that women politicians are often portrayed as extraordinary or achieving spectacular results. They are, in fact, too often referred as "women politicians". It conveys the wrong message that their presence is not a natural trend and implies that their coverage should focus on what makes them new instead of focusing on their programme and ideas.

Some research also suggests that women are more likely to be covered by news media if they are standing against other women or if a feature story is explicitly focused on women candidates[28].

"The gender lens is skewed to men when selecting interviewees in general but in the one in four chances that a woman is selected, the tendency is to portray the woman as an embodiment of a typical femininity of subordination and powerlessness even in cases where the woman holds senior public office, as media monitoring studies on portrayal of political women have demonstrated," says Ross.

Opposite may also be true at times. Some women politicians are criticised for assimilating their behaviour and/or features to those of their male counterparts; they are accused of trying to legitimise themselves by adhering to the more male oriented script or look.

A result of this is that women politicians tend to be portrayed in accordance with a number of stereotypes that have nothing do to with the office they are running for. Given the rise in infotainment, such stereotypes can only be reinforced when political programme comes second and personalisation of politics comes first.

d. What do politicians speak about?

Research tends to show that questioned framed at politicians are still dependent on gender. A study of press coverage of the 2003 Swiss parliamentary election showed that women candidates were most likely to be reported in the areas of education, culture and gender issues. They were least likely to appear in stories about the EU, foreign policy and agriculture[29].

A study in 2014 in Ecuador[30], in which researchers monitored news during the election period, showed that 75% of candidates responding to interviews on issues such as foreign policy, national security and international agreements were men. A more recent Swiss

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[27] Gender, Politics, News: A Game of Three Sides, First Edition, Karen Ross, 2017.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] Doing gender in der Wahlkampfkommunikation, Sibylle Hardmeier and Anita Klöti, 2004.

[30] Abordaje Mediatico En Epoca De Campaña Electorav http://whomakesthenews.org/articles/abordaje-mediatico-en-epoca-de-campana-electora

study[31] showed, however, that in Switzerland progress has been made in not attributing specific hard issues to male candidates and soft issues to women candidates.

e. Women politicians subject of stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are generalised views and preconceived ideas developed by society according to which individuals are categorised into particular gender groups, typically defined as "women" and "men", and are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex.[32]

Research shows that women politicians receive more attention coverage on their appearance, sex, private life and family life as compared to men.

These practices contradict the principle of equal treatment that should apply to all politicians.

i. Style over substance

After the news broke that Theresa May would be the new leader of the Conservative party and hence the next prime minister, the British daily *The Sun*'s headline read "Heel boys" above a large photograph of May's kitten heels appearing to trample on the heads of her male opponents and colleagues[33].

Hair colour, loss of weight, outfits are topics that are often more commented than women's politicians' policy decisions, voters' records and programmes. A study found that in newspaper coverage of 2002 gubernatorial and senatorial election in the United States of America (hereinafter "the U.S."), 6% of women's news stories mentioned their appearance compared to 1% in men's stories[34].

It is worth noting, however, that the press has more recently developed a trend to also comment on and/or mock male politicians' physical appearance. Media have for instance heavily commented on the height of the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, the tan of the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, as well as the hair of the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs Boris Johnson and the United States President Donald Trump.

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[31] Les élections dans les médias: les stéréotypes de genre disparaissent, mais les candidates restent sous-représentées, Commentaire de la CFQF sur l'étude "genre et médias au préalable des élections fédérales 2015" (October 2016).

[32] Combating gender stereotyping and sexism in the media, Council of Europe, https://rm.coe.int/168064379b.

[33] Handbags and kitten heels – how not to write about prime ministers, Laura Bates, The Guardian 12 July 2016.

[34] Gender and Campaign Communication: TV Ads, Web Sites, and Media Coverage, Dianne G. Bystrom, Mary Christine Banwart, Lynda Lee Kaid and Terry A. Robertson, 2006.

ii. Sexualisation

"*Hot potato*" ("Patata bollente") was the headline used by the Italian right-wing newspaper *Libero* on 10 February 2017 to describe Rome's Mayor Virgina Raggi. Patata is also a colloquial Italian term for the female genitals and the headline was heavily criticised for its misogyny.

A study conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians from 39 countries spread over five regions of the world[35] reveals that 27.3% of respondents believe traditional media had disseminated images or comments about them that were highly contemptuous or sexually challenged. That proportion rose to 41.8% in the case of images or comments disseminated through social media.

iii. Family status

The fact that women politicians are single or mothers is regularly a topic in the news. For the men, the question of how they manage to combine career and family rarely arises in the media. But for women this challenge - often presented as the "juggling act"- is constantly present[36].

iv. Wives of politicians

During election campaigns, media have a tendency to focus on political leaders' wives more than on women politicians themselves. In the United Kingdom, during the 1992 election campaign Norma Major and Glenys Kinnock appeared more often in the daily press than any politician, with the exception of the party leaders and Margaret Thatcher[37].

In France, Aurélie Filippetti, former Minister of Culture, was appointed spokesperson of socialist candidate Benoit Hamon during the 2017 presidential election campaign. However, she was still presented by some media as the wife of socialist politician Arnaud Montebourg rather than as former Minister of Culture.

Political leaders' wifes are usually subject to widespread comments from the press in relation to their appearance. Brigitte Macron, wife of French President Emmanuel Macron, was heavily commented in the press during French presidential elections 2017 for her looks and age.

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[35] Sexism, Harassment and violence against women parliamentarians, IPU, October 2016.

[36] Portraying Politics, a Toolkit on gender and television.

[37] Gender, Politics, News: A Game of Three Sides, First Edition, Karen Ross, 2017.

v. Social media effect

Social platforms have great potential for disseminating political messages and ideas; given their widespread use they are an effective way of breaking down barriers between politicians and voters. They enable active participation in the electoral process to a larger number of people than ever before and give voice to groups which have traditionally not taken part in political debate, such as young people.

While there is no hard evidence available as to how the visibility on social media translates into votes, there are indications that these media increasingly influence the voters' choices. For example, in a British research surrounding the 2015 general election, 34% of voters in the youngest group (18-24 year olds) considered that something they read on social media would influence their vote.[38]

Wide participation on social media sites offers a wide range of perspectives, but has also numerous negative implications. These sites may be (mis)used for partisan campaigning[39] where there is generally little tolerance towards opposing views. Moreover, depth and quality of debate are often compromised in favour of speed and volume. While online platforms allow voters to share information and opinions freely, they also leave the door open to excessive comments, including sexism and sexist hate speech.[40]

The anonymity and physical distance of many Twitter and Facebook users who publish mostly without consideration for media ethics, as well as empowerment they receive from likeminded individuals, can add to the increase of widespread sexism that surrounds in particular women who work in the public sphere. Self-regulatory mechanisms of social media and their codes of conduct, even where they exist, do not seem sufficient to achieve an appropriate balance between the free flow of information and valid concerns about reducing sexist hate-speech.

In 2016, the United States presidential election demonstrated the political power of social media. During the campaign Hillary Clinton was subject to hundreds of sexist messages per day. Tweets directed at her showcased a broad range of sexism, from appearance-related insults to obscene names paired with sexual threats. Users told Clinton to "go back to the kitchen" and suggested that "if she can't keep her man under control, she can't keep the country under control."[41]

A survey[42] commissioned by Name It. Change It., a joint non-partisan media-monitoring and accountability project of the Women's Media Center and She Should Run (a project dedicated to increasing the number of women in public leadership), was conducted during the final days of the United States presidential election 2016. The survey showed that social

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[38] https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/third-young-people-think-social-media-will-influence-their-vote

[39] The Council of Europe's Study on the use of internet in electoral campaigns, 2017.

[40] The Council of Europe's Factsheet on Combating sexist hate speech (https://rm.coe.int/1680651592).

[41] Does Sexism on Social Media Hurt Women Running for Office?, Madison Shumway, The Bengal 2017.

[42] Where voters saw most sexist treatment of women candidates in the media, Name it. Change it. 2016.

media were the source where voters saw the most sexist treatment of women candidates. They were followed by cable news and broadcast news.
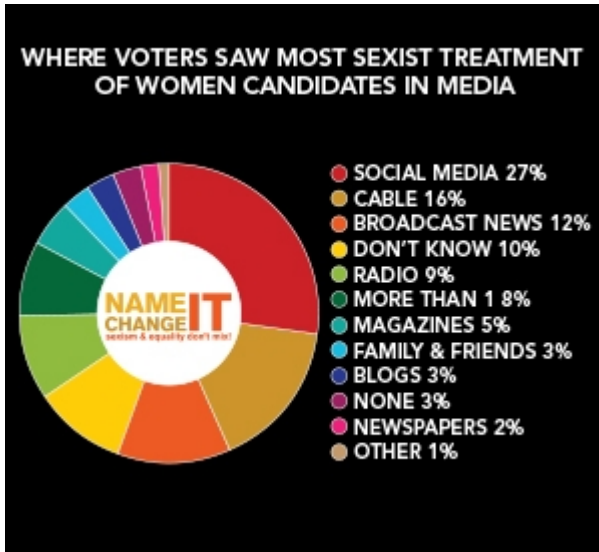
Source: Name it. Change it.

"This research shows an awareness of media sexism toward women candidates and elected officials and affirms the power of the media in shaping opinions, influencing perceptions, and fostering stereotypes," said Julie Burton, president of the Women's Media Center. *"The fact that 87% of voters could report seeing sexist media coverage of women candidates underscores both the problem and the need for media accountability for this kind of content—especially on social media, which had substantially more reports of sexism than other media platforms."*

4. Influence of media reports on voters' opinion

Public opinion is inevitably influenced by the way the media present the facts[43]. As regards their effects on voting choices, two main concerns which follow from the preceding sections are a lack of coverage and/or sexist coverage of women candidates. In the context of political candidatures, the fact that public debate is shaped by the focuses of the media indicates a correlation between attention received by the media and popularity of an individual candidate. Indeed, studies confirm such correlation, despite the complexity of the question of whether media attention is the cause or rather the consequence of a candidate's popularity.[44]

Secondly, as regards gender-based stereotypes, it has been found that their accentuation during election periods is likely to influence voters' opinion on the different candidates and their voting decision. Interviewing women politicians on "soft" issues only, namely health,

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[43] Handbook on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on gender equality in Media.

[44] http://www.niemanlab.org/2016/01/how-much-influence-does-the-media-really-have-over-elections-digging-into-the-data/

education, culture, fashion, may give voters the impression that they are not fit for other issues. Of course, these topics do matter to women politicians and to voters but if women are the only ones answering them it reinforces the stereotype that they are "women's issues [45]. This is also damaging for the distribution of political portfolios later on, with women being more likely to be in charge of "soft" issues portfolios and impeding their legitimacy when in charge of "hard issues" portfolios.

As regards the effect of female and male politician's portrayal and their influence on voters' decisions, a research conducted in the United States suggests that voters tend to respond more positively to political candidates that, regardless of their gender, receive the type of coverage usually accorded to male candidates, including the opportunity to voice their views on "hard" issues such as crime or defence[46].

Furthermore, the "*Name it. Change it.*" research project[47] suggests that the way the media cover the appearance of women candidates matters in elections. The findings of the 2014 nationwide research showed that media coverage of a woman candidate's appearance diminished votes in her favour. It also showed that neutral, positive and negative descriptions of a woman candidate's appearance all had damaging effects on the women's candidacies. Contrary, the male opponents paid no price for that type of coverage.

Online initiatives such as Kaleida[48] in the United Kingdom, which measure the flow of information around the world, could help measure users' reaction to gender equality topic covered in the news. The project produces insights into what matters most and to whom by analysing the output of news publishers and the sharing habits of consumers. While Kaleida's results on gender equality show that the topic is poorly addressed in the news, some results show that women share coverage about British Prime Minister Theresa May on Facebook more than men. A similar research could contribute in measuring consumers' habits in election coverage from a gender viewpoint.

Part III. Review of national regulatory and self-regulatory mechanisms and practices

The section provides an overview of national gender equality mechanisms aimed at ensuring fair and balanced media coverage of women and men candidates for elected offices. Furthermore, it presents some tools and guidelines which can be used to monitor and improve gender portrayal in the election reporting. In this connection, it must be observed that while many media companies have adopted some form of commitment towards gender equality either as a result of binding legislation or voluntarily, few specific initiatives have

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[45] Portraying Politics, a toolkit on gender and television.

[46] Does being male help? An investigation of the effects of candidate gender and campaign coverage on evaluation of U.S. Senate candidates, Kim Kahn in *Journal of politics,* 1992.

[47] "Name it. Change it." Research on appearance coverage of women and campaign simulation, Women media center and She should run, 2013. http://www.nameitchangeit.org/pages/name-it/

[48] www.kaleida.com

directly tackled election coverage from a gender perspective. However, many initiatives to strengthen gender equality in broadcasting content presented below could also be applied, to a certain extent, to election coverage.

Under Article 10 of the Convention, any measure that restricts freedom of expression, including at election time, must be proven to be necessary in a democratic society, and the least restrictive means should always be preferred. While there are anti-discrimination laws and detailed regulation of political campaigns in a number of member states (especially as regards audio-visual media), self-regulatory initiatives can provide a less restrictive, effective approach for bringing the gender dimension into the limelight of electoral communication.

Media regulatory authorities can play a great role in setting the pace of developments within the media sector; offering them a watchdog role in sustaining gender equality among European broadcasters could contribute to a better gender portrayal in the news including in election coverage. However, a precondition for that is that the regulators themselves are aware of the issues involved. To achieve such awareness, it is important to aim at a proper gender balance also in the membership of national regulatory authorities. In this connection, a study carried out in 2012 by the EIGE found that across 44 independent media regulators in the EU, women made 31% of board members.[49]

Lastly, few existing initiatives deal with social media specifically, in spite of the growing importance of this component of media landscapes. This is probably in part explained by the current uncertainties regarding social media generally. While public regulation has been deemed to be justified for broadcast media and self-regulation has been the recommended approach for print media, the debates around social media have not definitely settled.

1. Statutory requirements regarding gender equality in the media

Since 2012 Italian media are required by law ("*Par condicio di genere*") to provide a balanced representation of women and men in their election campaign coverage and political programmes. The Italian regulatory authority AGCOM was requested to publish data on the presence of women politicians in radio and TV political programmes, but to our knowledge no report has been produced to date. One of the reasons for that advanced by some women groups is that such report would be a challenge, considering that candidates are mainly men. Moreover, the law is based on quantitative criteria only, leaving out any qualitative ones that would look into the type of portrayal politicians receive in the press.

In Belgium, French speaking public broadcaster RTBF must commit to the National Audiovisual Council (CSA) to be "active in the respect of the principle of equality between women and men and in the fight against sexist messages and stereotypes"[50].

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[49] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations, 2013.

[50] Etude comparative des politiques des régulateurs membres du REFRAM en matière d'égalité hommes-femmes, 2011.

The French Law on Gender Equality adopted on 4 August 2014[51] establishes the role of the National Audiovisual Council (CSA) as regards respect for women's rights in the audio-visual communication field. For example, the CSA must ensure that women and men are fairly represented in audio-visual communication services and pay special attention to the way in which women are portrayed in their programmes, with a view to combating stereotypes, sexist prejudice, degrading images, violence against women and domestic violence. The public audio-visual services are also tasked with combating sexist prejudice and violence against women by broadcasting programmes about these subjects.

2. Media regulators' and equality authorities' strategies for gender equality in the media

Some media regulators initiated their own policies and guidelines to address and improve gender portrayal in the news.

The Declaration on gender equality adopted in 2011 by the French Speaking Media Regulators' Network (REFRAM)[52] is a joint commitment by the members of REFRAM to promote women's access to the media, recommending in particular "regular, quantitative" assessment of gender equality policies, with easier access to data making it possible to take stock of the situation. Following a comparative study on the gender equality policies of REFRAM's member regulators, REFRAM published a Vade-mecum[53] on integrating the gender equality dimension through regulators' policies.

In the United Kingdom, regulator Ofcom published in November 2016 guidance and resources for broadcasters on how to improve diversity from setting up a strategy to monitoring and evaluating its impact, recruiting new talents and training the workplace.[54]

It may also be noted that national institutions for the promotion of equality can play a useful role in tackling gender stereotypes. For instance, the "High Council for Equality between women and men" (Haut Conseil à l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes), a governmental body, published in 2015 a practical guide a brochure aimed at public services for a "Communication without sexist stereotypes"[55]. While not specifically targeting the media, the guidelines encourage users to eliminate all forms of sexist expression in their communication material, recommend to not only limit to women questions on personal life, and suggest to include an equal representation of women and men in all medium and conferences.

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[51] https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000029330832&categorieLien=id http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/afchTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000029330832&categorieLien=id

[52] Déclaration du REFRAM sur l'égalité entre hommes et femmes dans les médias audiovisuels, 2011.

[53] REFRAM Vade-mecum égalité hommes-femmes, 2012.

[54] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/information-for-industry/guidance/diversity/diversity-guidance

[55] Guide pratique pour une communication publique sans stéréotype de sexe, Haut Conseil à l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes, 2015.

3. Media self-regulation

a) Journalist organisations and press councils

The International Federation of Journalists' Declaration of principles on the conduct of journalists[56] states the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of gender which has been reproduced in most codes of ethics across the globe.

However, most journalists' codes of practice refer only to the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of gender, without providing further detail of what a sexist stereotype involves. A study of European Press councils conducted in 2009 shows that only 15 of them specifically prohibit gender discrimination[57].

Press councils and other instruments of self-regulation such as mediators have not been highly involved in the gender equality debate. Complaints concerning content contrary to gender equality remain very limited and cannot be departed from the lack of public knowledge about existing rules and the process for lodging a complaint[58]. A "Commitment to self-regulation to improve women portrayal in the media" (*Acte d'engagement pour une démarche d'autorégulation visant à améliorer l'image des femmes dans les medias*) was signed by representatives of French media to improve the presence of women experts and raise awareness of newsrooms[59]. In 2013, key French media organisations representing 61 TV channels, radio stations and print publications signed a self-regulation agreement undertaking to strive to increase the number of women experts appearing in their programmes and articles. The agreement had been prepared by the Commission on the Image of Women in the Media, which comprised not only media and regulators, but also educators, lawyers, health professionals and NGOs. The commission monitors compliance with the agreement, and produces an annual report.

The Canadian association of broadcasters in 2008 adopted a code on equitable portrayal[60]. It intends to overcome "unduly negative portrayal and stereotyping in broadcast programming, including commercial messages, based on matters of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or physical or mental disability." In its specific section on "language and terminology" the code emphasises that "equality of the sexes must be recognised and reinforced through the proper use of language and terminology. Broadcasters shall employ language of a non-sexist nature in their programming, by avoiding, whenever possible, expressions which relate to only one gender."

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[56] http://www.ifj.org/about-ifj/ifj-code-of-principles/

[57] Codes, Press Councils and Discrimination in Europe, William Gore, 2009.

[58] Handbook on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec (2013) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on gender equality in Media.

[59] Acte D'engagement pour une démarche d'autorégulation visant à améliorer l'image des femmes dans les médias, 2010 : http://www.femmesenvue.eu/wp-content/uploads/charte_femmes_dans_les_medias.pdf

[60] Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Equitable Portrayal Code (2008).

b) Media and journalists' best practices

While media have adopted guidelines on coverage of elections, including time, paid political advertising, right of reply and opinion polls, very few have inserted specific provisions on gender equality in election coverage. Some media have however taken interesting steps towards better portrayal of women, although election coverage seems to be left aside in most initiatives.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is committed to providing diverse programmes that reflect the full range of audiences' interests, beliefs and perspectives. In its 2016-2020 diversity and inclusion strategy[61] the BBC commits to build "*a workforce at least as diverse, if not more so, than any other in the industry*" , meet "*portrayal targets that cover a much wider range of diversity than any other broadcaster, with a bigger impact for audiences across a wider range of programmes*" and enhance their diversity culture by hardwiring "*diversity in what we do, making it something that everyone at the BBC understands and all those who make programmes for us supports*". An important target for portrayal is to achieve "50% women on screen, on-air and in lead roles across all genres from Drama to News by 2020". To increase the presence of women experts on screen, the BBC Academy held in 2017, in conjunction with BBC News and Women in Film and Television UK, a free media familiarization[62] day for women experts, including women in politics, who are interested in appearing on television, radio and online as contributors or presenters.

Tonight with Vincent Browne, a late evening current affairs television programme aired by TV3 in Ireland, decided in 2012 to bring in a policy of gender parity[63] – meaning that half of the experts interviewed should be women. Though it has not been formally evaluated, TV3's policy has influenced the media landscape in Ireland, and other broadcasters have followed suit.

Italian public broadcaster RAI published data on the representation of politicians during the 2014 electoral campaigns on a weekly basis.

An interesting example of co-operation between the media and the authorities is featured in the agreement between the Spanish government and the Spanish public broadcaster RTVE from 2009[64] whereby the broadcaster is entrusted and assisted with the dissemination of content on all its channels promoting gender equality and combating violence against women. The agreement also requires that all advertising on RTVE be in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination on grounds of gender. Lastly, the agreement provides for training on equality for RTVE employees.

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[61] BBC Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2016-2020 http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/diversity/pdf/diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2016.pdf

[62] http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/news/article/art20170127102127476

[63] http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/ireland/irish-current-affairs-programme-gives-women-equal-place

[64] http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20090707/rtve-tendra-programacion-especifica-favor-igualdad-entre-hombres-mujeres/283924.shtml

Global Voices is a citizens' media news site that provides a space for individuals to write about politics. According to *The Guardian's* open gender tracker team women produce 51% of all posts.

Belgian TV Notélé is a local TV channel that proposed in the 1990s to all political parties to introduce diversity in their political debates and adapt their choice of representatives on stage. They scored 41.94% in the CSA 2014 study on women representation in pre-electoral debate.[65]

The *Gender, Media and Election Watch blog*[66] was set by members of the Network of Women in Media in India and aims to examine how political parties and candidates are viewing women's issues, female electorates, candidates and examine the media's handling of women voters and politicians.

A number of initiatives have been launched to improve the presence of women as experts in the news. One of the latest is *Expertalia[67]*, a database of female experts developed by the Belgian Association of professional Journalists (AJP) to respond to women's absence as news sources. Another examples are *Expertes.eu*[68] (launched by the French public service broadcasters Radio France and France Television) and The Women's Room[69] databases of female experts aimed at increasing women's presence in their programmes. Useful tips on how to manage those lists have been developed by Danish KVINFO database[70].

In Sweden, *Prognosis*[71] is an online gender equality tracker that monitors social media interactions and gender equality through algorithms.

4. Civil society initiatives

The *She-Expert Initiative*[72] was launched by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies in Cyprus to improve the "visibility of women in the media, increase the inclusion of women's voices on key issues in the national dialogue, fight sexism and bias in media coverage, and increase professional opportunities for women". The project is developing an online "Expert Women's Platform and Database" with the aim to become the leading source of expert women for organisations, employers, political parties, as well as the media in Cyprus.

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[65] La représentation des femmes dans les débats pré-électoraux télévisés belges francophones, CSA, Belgique, Mai 2014.

[66] https://nwmigenderwatch.wordpress.com/

[67] www.expertalia.be

[68] http://expertes.eu

[69] http://thewomensroom.org.uk/index.phpa

[70] http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/denmark/kvinfo-expert-database

[71] http://www.prognosis.se/

[72] http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/call-for-applicants-experts-womens-initiative/#more-6539

The NGO Forum 50%[73] launched in collaboration with The Nordic Chamber an international mentoring and training programme for female candidates in the Czech Republic. This initiative is inspired by Denmark and Norway, where political parties run mentoring programmes and training courses for female politicians. Activities include workshops, trainings and consultancy, training of women politicians and women interested in politics, networking and mentoring, media campaigns to support women politicians in the elections (public discussions, press conferences, workshops, web site, conferences) as well as studies on women's representation.

CELEM, the Spanish coordinator of the European Women's Lobby, developed a database of gender-aware journalists to ensure that gender equality concerns are sent to Spanish media and are no longer ignored. It researched the journalists likely to be sympathetic to the cause of women's equality and developed a database. The database contributed to raise the profile of women's issues in the press, claims CELEM. It has helped journalists to take a gender perspective when reporting the news, and established CELEM as an expert source of information on gender[74].

In Slovakia the organisation *Freedom of Choice* worked together with media organisations to promote, discuss, provide options for and develop Codes of conduct for different media and the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission, the Advertising Standards Council and other bodies. This was part of a larger activity with the Ministry on sensitising the media. Other activities included the assessment of the role of media in gender equality and gender stereotyping, a gender analysis of media communications and gender institutions, sexism and gender discrimination in advertising, a gender analysis of media organisations as a workplace (vertical and horizontal segregation) and lastly, an analysis of self-regulation in media ethics and gender equality[75].

5. Tools and guidelines to improve gender portrayal in media coverage

A few existing tools can be very useful to monitor gender portrayal in the news and some of them are specifically dedicated to election reporting.

The *Election coverage from a Gender Coverage from a Gender Perspective, a Media Monitoring Manual*[76] by UN Women and IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) provides a monitoring tool to assess the presence of women in election coverage as well as the gender topic in political debates.

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[73]   http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/czech-republic/czech-female-politicians-learn-international-experience

[74] http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/spain/database-gender-aware-journalists

[75] http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-and-tools/slovakia/codes-conduct

[76] Election coverage from a Gender perspective, a Media monitoring Manual, UN Women, IDEA.

UNESCO's *Gender Sensitive Indicators in the Media*[77] supports the monitoring of women and men presence in media and news content including in politics. While not making specific reference to elections, the indicators focus on important aspects such as the proportions of women and men producing or reporting various news subjects including politics, women and men appearing in news on politics or stories highlighting gender equality/inequality aspects of events, and issues including politics and government.

The High Authority for Regulation of the Audiovisual Media in Morocco (HACA) put together a monitoring tool to analyse audiovisual media through a gender lens[78].

The *Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)* is run by the World Association of Christian Communications (WACC). Every five years researchers, students and media professionals around the world analyse the presence of women in the news. The analysis takes place on one and same day around the world and looks into politicians' presence in the news, but also into persons who report on politics. The GMMP provides analysis grids that are recognised monitoring standards used by all researchers involved in the process. This allows for comparison and definition of general trends across regions.

The *Learning resources kit to strengthen gender-ethical journalism and media policy* launched by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the World Association of Christian Communications (WACC) contains a whole chapter on reporting on women in public office, including a sample story analysis, facts about women in government and reporting guidelines for journalists[79].

Portraying Politics is a toolkit on gender and television. It aims to stimulate debate among journalists, programme-makers, media managers and journalists' teachers on the way media portray politicians on television. Created by representatives of European public TV, journalists' organisations and journalism training centers, it aims to "make visible the media practices" involved in the representation of women and men in public life and promote "critical reflection and change".

The EU funded project AGEMI promotes gender equality by focusing on the next generation of media professionals who have not yet been affected by the gendered media workplace. It comprises educational components as well as knowledge-sharing among journalism students, media professionals and academics. It provides a resource bank of best practices for media industries to use to strengthen gender equality, an online educational module, training sessions and internships in media organisations.

In addition, it must also be noted that academic research plays an important role in the understanding of the issues.

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[77] Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media, Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content, 2012.

[78] Contribution à la lutte contre les stéréotypes fondés sur le genre et à la promotion de la culture de l'égalité hommes-femmes à travers les médias audiovisuels- proposition d'une démarche de monitoring des programmes audiovisuels, Octobre 2014.

[79] Learning resources kit to strengthen gender-ethical journalism ad media policy, IFJ and WACC, 2012.

Part IV. Conclusions

Women and men continue to be subject to significantly different portrayal in the news. The same conclusions can be reached about women and men running for office. While few studies in Europe have regularly looked into the media coverage of elections through a gender lens, findings show that men are more visible and that women are subject to discrimination.

Although the data and initiatives presented in the study lead us to conclude that there is a growing awareness about the issues of gender equality in the field of politics and media, there is still little research into the portrayal of women candidates during elections campaigns. Also the volume of regulatory and self-regulatory instruments and standards addressing the issue is very limited.

Gender dimension should become an integral part of media policies and practices. In addition, the implementation of the existing policies and practices across the member states of the Council of Europe should be continuously examined to acquire an accurate overview of the implementation process, environmental changes and obstacles faced in gender mainstreaming.

As gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, the enlisted instruments are in most member states to be implemented across several sectors which may hinder prompt and proper implementation.

Furthermore, there is but few data available on the impact of the gender-biased media coverage of candidates on the outcome of the elections. The existing instruments and accompanying guidelines provide adequate recommendations on how to remedy the gender bias in media generally; however, none have specifically focused on gender equality in the media coverage of elections.

Therefore, while it is duly acknowledged that there is a gender dimension to media pluralism and diversity of content, this fact still needs to be brought to the attention of member states and all stakeholders in civil society in the context of media coverage of elections, with specific issues such as gender balance statements, angle from which the story is told, pluralism of sources, gender portrayal, etc.

The study included social media and generally all new developments in the media ecosystem. It shows that social media and new media have so far not been much taken into consideration in the existing initiatives aimed at improving gender equality in the media coverage of elections.

The results of this study call on the relevant stakeholders to:

- reaffirm the need for action to address the issue and push for further mainstreaming of gender equality in election coverage;

- address specifically the situation of gender equality in the media coverage of elections.

To this end, the following mechanisms may be considered:

1. Regulatory and self-regulatory mechanisms

a) The following Council of Europe's existing standards targeting women in the media and sexism should be implemented:

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)15 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns;

- Recommendation No. R (99) 15 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on measures concerning media coverage of election campaigns;

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media;

- Resolution 2144 (2017) on Ending cyber-discrimination and online hate, Parliamentary Assembly, 2017.

- Recommendation 1931 (2010) and Resolution 1751 (2010) on Combating sexist stereotypes in the media, Parliamentary Assembly, 25 June 2010;

- Recommendation 1555 (2002) on The image of women in the media, Parliamentary Assembly, 24 April 2002.

b) Gender equality should be defined in national legislation covering the media and made an explicit part thereof, ensuring that a clear distinction exists between that principle and the protection of diversity. There should furthermore exist concrete implementation policies to achieve gender equality in the media coverage of electoral campaigns aimed at enhancing women's visibility in such campaigns and their access to the media.

c) Political parties should be encouraged to be mindful in their internal policies of a gender equality perspective and to enhance a balanced representation for women and men in electoral campaigns.

d) Dialogue should be encouraged among media practitioners and self-regulatory bodies on the gender perspective of the coverage of elections. It could include the promotion of self-regulatory mechanisms to handle individual complaints on media content that is contrary to gender equality.

e) Gender perspective should be present in all initiatives adopted by social media companies in relation to coverage of elections, as well as in the work of relevant self-regulatory mechanisms that would be competent for media coverage of elections on social media. All such initiatives, including all relevant standards applicable to content moderation, should at at minimum be transparent, that is, publicly available on a website in a clear, understandable language and appropriate format.

f) The composition of editorial teams and the assignment of subjects to journalists should be reviewed with consideration of the gender breakdown. Policies should be put in place to support more in leading roles in media organisations.

g) The production and supply of media content should be monitored with a view to achieving a balance between women and men during election campaigns. Equality requirements for the media may be considered with regard to production and dissemination of programmes concerning politics and elections. Good practices should be encouraged among media outlets aiming at:

• Promoting broadcasting that is inclusive and reflects gender-based differences of perspective on the issues at stake;

• Ensuring that the set-up of shows, selection of guests, time attributed to each guest, role of host, framing of shots, allow female candidates to provide effective contribution to the debate and to avoid the stereotype which puts men at the centre and women at the margins of politics;

• Avoiding using gender stereotypes or biased language;

• Making equal gender representation a matter for editorial policy;

• Avoiding the "tabloidization" of media in terms of the representation of female candidates;

• Avoiding women candidates to be identified with sexist reference, reference to their family status or their relationship with others ("mother", "wife", "daughter", etc.);

• Promoting training of both female and male journalists on gender equality aimed at including gender dimension to political coverage;

• Monitoring gender commitments made by political parties and reporting on their progress;

• Monitoring regularly their own output setting targets for an equal gender representation.

• Adopting gender-sensitive policies in newsrooms.

2. Media educations and trainings

a) Media education and media literacy should be integrated into schools' curricula, providing for a steady process of awareness-raising in respect of gender equality, gender portrayal, sexist discrimination and violence against women.

b) Gender equality tools such as the UNESCO's Gender sensitive indicators in the media, the UN Women reporting on elections and training material such as Portraying Politics should be translated into the member states' languages and disseminated among relevant stakeholders.

c) Gender equality modules in journalism schools, including modules on covering elections through a gender lens, should be supported and teachers trained. Gender equality should be mainstreamed across all journalism courses to provide students with a critical approach to media representation of both sexes. Likewise, life-long learning on gender equality including election coverage should be provided for journalists, editors and other media workers at all levels of media governance, as well as for self-regulatory bodies.

d) Media companies should benefit from adequate expert support in the development of their own gender policies with regards to media content, including on election coverage, and should be encouraged to set up monitoring mechanisms to assess implementation.

3. Research

Additional research should be conducted on different aspects of election coverage to make the problem more visible, in particular to:

- analyse the impact of biased election coverage, from a gender perspective, on voters' perception of female politicians during elections campaigns; and male politicians during elections campaigns;

- measure and analyse the impact of social media sexism during election campaign on voters;

- provide regular reporting on women portrayal;

- collect initiatives and measures to counter unbalanced representation and biased portrayal of women, including by way of complaints;

- conduct research on media coverage of elections campaigns including detailed indications of how female and male politicians are treated by the media;

- conduct research on how media coverage differs for women politicians, across types of office, party and ethnicity and how women and men politicians are framed;

- make the results of those studies known to the public at large and also to media organisations.

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