

SECRETARIAT SUMMARY PAPER 1

Equal opportunities for leadership and decision-making in politics¹

Morning breakout group discussion

This paper summarises suggestions made in the videos circulated in advance of the meeting and submissions received during the Public Consultation process (www.citizensassembly.ie/!GNZAU1). It also includes recommendations found in a report from the Oireachtas on [women's participation in politics](#) from 2009, many of which are still relevant today. Where a suggestion from a submission or video is included, a link is provided. It also provides case study examples of how certain other countries have encouraged female political leadership and participation (pages 8-9)².

This paper is intended as a reminder of what you have read and seen in the material circulated in advance of the meeting. You may want to refer to some of the ideas in it during the breakout group discussion but it is not intended, nor would it be possible, for you to discuss every suggestion in this paper in the breakout group.

Part 1: Suggestions for recommendations made in the videos & submissions

Please note the order in which these recommendations are presented does not imply any ranking or judgement on these by the Secretariat.

Quotas: *for further background information on international use of quotas and the most commonly used arguments for and against quotas see pages 4-7*

1. Introduce gender quotas for local elections ([CA30179](#), [CA30200](#), [CA30204](#), [CA30207](#); Yvonne Galligan link; Women for Election link, IHREC link)
2. Introduce quotas for Seanad elections (Submissions: [CA30200](#), [CA30204](#), [CA30207](#); Women for Election link; EIGE)

¹ The Oireachtas Resolution invites the Citizens' Assembly to make recommendations to advance gender equality by bringing forward proposals that "in particular, seek to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in the workplace, politics and public life

² Sources include the OECD, the European Institute for Gender Equality and the European Commission

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3. Increase quotas to 50% for local and national elections (Yvonne Galligan link)

Education & awareness raising

4. Awareness campaigns outlining the benefits of increasing female participation in politics (Submissions: [CA30249](#); OECD, EIGE, Lenita Freidenvall video).

Family friendly and work life balance measures

5. Access to maternity leave for female politicians – there is currently no provision for maternity leave for public representatives in Ireland including TDs, Senators or Councillors (Submissions: [CA30178](#), [CA30179](#), [CA30207](#); Submissions video).
6. Additional supports to improve family-friendliness of local and national Government, for example paid parental leave or appropriate flexible working options (Submissions: [CA30178](#), [CA30200](#), OECD).
7. Promote family friendly practices in political parties and institutions including adjusting meeting times and rules to suit caring responsibilities, provide automatic pairing arrangements³ for new mothers in lieu of maternity leave, and increase the use of videoconferencing and distance voting (Oireachtas Report).

Role models, training and mentoring

8. Raise awareness by identifying female role models, using these in school and voter education programmes and advertising campaigns challenging traditional stereotypes of male politicians (Oireachtas Report)
9. Use the education system to encourage more women into politics through civic education (Oireachtas Report)
10. Specific training, mentoring and resources directed at active female politicians and women interested in political office (Submissions: [CA30262](#); Oireachtas Report; EIGE, Lenita Freidenvall video)
11. Increase diversity in politics across women in marginalised groups including ethnicity, race, sexuality, socio-economic background and ability through tailored supports including mentoring (Submission video, Lian Bell video, Maria Joyce video, IHREC video).
12. Encourage and support women's political networks (Oireachtas Report)

³ Pairing is an informal arrangement between government and opposition parties where a member abstains from voting while a member of the other party needs to be absent from the chamber.

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Monitoring progress and strengthening institutions

13. Systematic monitoring and highlighting of gender balance in public institutions including in leadership positions through regular public reporting (OECD)
14. Establish a national databank of potential women candidates (Oireachtas Report)
15. Government monitoring and reporting of political party gender recruitment practices (IHREC video)

Law reform and regulation

16. Strengthen regulation and monitoring of press and social media to reduce gendered or hateful language about female politicians (Submissions video).

Parliamentary and Party Practices

17. Require parties to commit to a certain level of expenditure on gender equality initiatives as a condition of public funding (Yvonne Galligan link, Lenita Freidenvall video).
18. Withhold a certain percentage of public funds year-on-year from parties and provide it as a dedicated equality fund to which parties must apply (Yvonne Galligan link)
19. Establish national funds and additional voluntary provisions by political parties to support female candidates and their electoral campaigns (EIGE, Oireachtas Report, Lenita Freidenvall video)
20. Gender sensitive recruitment and selection processes (including political) to mitigate against unconscious bias— e.g. remove gender identifying information on applications (Submissions: [CA30191](#), [CA30249](#), Lenita Freidenvall video).
21. Moves towards a gender sensitive parliamentary process, procedures and rules of conduct ensuring women and men have equal opportunities to enter and influence parliament and the parliamentary agenda, and that legislation is gender-sensitive. This can be done through, for example, ensuring parliamentary leadership positions (like Committee Chairs) are rotated between genders, that distribution of genders across committees is equitable or require legislation and budget decisions to be reviewed and assessed for gender impact (Submissions: [CA30204](#), OECD, EIGE).
22. Political parties to introduce recruitment drives specifically aimed at women (Oireachtas Report, Lenita Freidenvall video).

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23. Soft policies including adopting equal distribution of power and influence as a national goal, aiming for a gender balanced Cabinet and leading by example (Lenita Freidenvall video)

24. Unconscious bias training in public bodies (Submissions: [CA30249](#))

Part 2: Quotas

One of the most common tools for increasing female political participation is through the use of political quotas. Quotas can apply at local, national or Governmental level. Over 130 countries internationally have some sort of gender quota in politics.

The following section gives further information on quotas, including common types, how they work and which countries have them. Arguments for and against quotas are also provided.

Where are Quotas used or proposed? How do they work?

The most common types of political gender quotas internationally are:

1. Candidate quotas, which regulate by law the proportion of each gender political parties put forward for election. Ireland has quotas at national level for election to the Dáil (see below) – this rule does not apply to non-party candidates.
2. Voluntary political party quotas which are agreed internally by individual parties.
3. Reserved seats, which regulate the number of each gender elected, for example 30% of seats held by either gender. The exact target varies from country to country. Reserved seats quotas are not used in European countries, and are not generally considered suitable for European political systems.⁴

Of the 130 countries which have some sort of gender quota in politics, 57 have legislated candidate quotas (including Ireland). 25 countries have reserved seat quotas. It should be noted that reserved seat quotas are not used in Europe and predominantly apply in some countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East

⁴ Oireachtas Joint Committee Report on Women's Participation in Politics, p. 31: https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_justice_and_equality/report_s/2009/2009-11-05_women-s-participation-in-politics_en.pdf

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In 2012 Ireland introduced legal candidate quotas where political party candidates for general election (national level) must be at least 30% of each gender (this was recommended by the Oireachtas Report). This will rise to 40% in 2023. If the quota is not met, the party loses 50% of its State funding. In 2020 23% of TDs elected were women and 31% of candidates were women.

See below for information on how these three types of quotas work in countries with a higher than average level of female representation in politics. Click the link for more information on each country:

[Spain – Legal Candidate Quotas](#)

Spain has legal candidate gender quotas at national level (both Senate and Parliament) and local level. Candidates of either sex should make up 40% of each political party's lists.⁵ Political parties are given a short period to adjust lists that do not meet quota requirements and if they fail to do so the Electoral Commission will not approve the list. In 2019, 44% of the Congress of Deputies (Parliament equivalent) were women.

[Sweden – Voluntary Political Party Quotas](#)

Three of the major Swedish political parties have quotas, and many have been operating for several decades. The Social Democratic Party has alternating sexes on their party lists, resulting in a 50% quota (since 1978). The Left Party also has a 50% minimum quota for women on party lists (since 1978). The Green Party has a 50% gender quota, plus or minus one person (first quotas introduced in 1987). In 2018, 47% of seats in Parliament were held by women, and the current Swedish Government calls itself a 'Feminist Government'.

[Rwanda – Reserved Seat Quotas](#)

Under the Rwandan Constitution, at least 30% of seats in decision making institutions must be women. This includes the Parliament and Senate at national level, at local level, and for political party candidates. The Chamber of Deputies (Parliament) has gone further, with at least 50% of seats reserved for women. In 2018, 61% of people elected to the Chamber of Deputies were women.

⁵ Many European countries use party list proportional representation where parties make lists of candidates to be elected and seats are distributed to each party in proportion to the number of votes received. Unlike the electoral system in Ireland, elections are not based on constituencies and candidates are chosen nationally.

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See below some countries with each type of quota, and latest election results. Click the links for more information on each country:

Type of Quota	Country	Latest election result by gender
Legal Candidate Quota	Spain	44% women
	Poland	29% women
	Belgium	41% women
	Ireland	23% women
Voluntary political party quota	Sweden	47% women
	United Kingdom	34% women
	Hungary	12% women
	Netherlands	33% women
Reserved Seat	Rwanda	61% women
	Kosovo	33% women
	Pakistan	20% women
	Guyana	35% women
No quota	Denmark	37% women
	Finland	42% women
	Estonia	19% women
	Latvia	18% women

Source: [IDEA Gender Quotas Database](#)

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Common arguments for and against quotas⁶

For	Against
Quotas for women do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from taking a representative share of the political seats.	Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, if women are given preference.
Women have the right as citizens to equal representation.	Quotas are undemocratic, because voters should be able to decide who is elected.
Women's experiences are needed in political life.	Quotas set women against each other, competing for a certain number of "women's seats", which might destroy co-operation and unity.
Election is about representation, not educational qualifications.	Instating a quota might lead parties to view them as a ceiling rather than a floor on the number of women, stalling progress on equality in the long run.
Women are just as qualified as men, but women's qualifications are downgraded and minimized in a male-dominated political system.	Quotas imply that politicians are elected because of their gender, not because of their qualifications with the risk that more qualified candidates are pushed aside.
It is in fact the political parties that control the nominations, not primarily the voters who decide who gets elected.	Many women do not want to get elected just because they are women.
Introducing quotas may cause conflicts, but only temporarily.	Introducing quotas creates significant conflicts within the party organization.

⁶ This is drawn from this article and is not in any particular order:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/01/are-quotas-for-women-in-politics-a-good-idea/251237/>

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Part 3: Examples of international measures (non quota)⁷

Germany

The [*Helene Werner Kolleg*](#) is a €10,000 award given to 15 outstanding local female politicians each term. Money is used to plan and execute local activities. Winners also receive individual coaching to plan their political careers. A network has been formed out of the winners, who act as role models and ambassadors for more women in local politics.

Portugal

Portugal promoted female politicians through an awareness and publicity campaign centred around a toolkit titled [*In Politics Women Can Do It!*](#). The toolkit described supports and practical activities that trainers can implement in communication and leadership skills. The publication of the toolkit was accompanied by a nationwide campaign outlining why increasing female participation in politics is good for democracy. Education guides were also produced to promote citizenship and gender equality for students aged 13 years and up.

France

Since 1999 both houses of the French parliament have had a [*Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*](#) whose function is to mainstream gender through the legislative process. Each delegation has 36 members, and are cross-party including both genders. The Delegations can review proposed legislation and monitor implementation. They also conduct consultation and research to influence future legislation.

Czech Republic

The Czech Republic ran a [*mentoring programme for women in politics*](#) which partnered Czech female politicians with Danish and Norwegian women who have successful political careers. It aimed to increase women's representation by sharing experiences from countries where it is already at a high level. Based on

⁷ These examples are drawn from the European Institute of Gender Equality. The links lead to further information of each example

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interest and skills rather than political party views, mentoring pairs met face to face and had electronic meetings at least twice a month

Portugal

The [*From Woman to Woman*](#) project, run over two years, was intended to encourage young women, including ethnic minorities, to participate in politics. It included:

- Mentoring of 30 women by women active in politics;
- A competence development course covering human rights, intercultural dialogue, media and press, politics, and gender equality;
- Nine social transformation projects led by the mentees for gender equality (including a focus on young men); and
- Publication of handbooks

Sweden

Sweden published [*The Power Handbook*](#) which aimed to educate people in politics about domination techniques and tools that can be used against such techniques. Domination techniques are defined as strategies of social manipulation and domination by which a dominant group maintains its power and privilege and can include ridiculing, ignoring, withholding information, shaming and double binding. The Power Handbook promoted ways to resist such use of dominance techniques and was published in eight languages.