

Comparative Analysis of Woman's Representation in Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia

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ABSTRACT

Woman's representation in politics is an ongoing issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia. Even though these states have sufficient laws and legal documents that regulate woman's political participation, situation in theory is still devastating. In this paper, we gave an overview of mentioned legal framework in case studies after which we analyzed current status of woman's representation in politics through primary method of literature review. Data was collected through primarily and secondary sources. Primarily sources were based on the qualitative research of previous work, meta-analysis and comprehensive literature reviews while secondary data was collected from official webpages from relevant election commissions from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia, with emphasis on the mixed-methods approach and small-n comparison. We came to conclusion that both countries have strong legal framework for ensuring higher level of female participation but still, it's revival in today's political world is still missing. Finally, we connected results of elected females with Society 5.0

Key words: woman's representation; political participation; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Republic of Croatia; Society 5.0

ABSTRAK

Representasi perempuan dalam politik merupakan isu yang sedang berlangsung di Bosnia dan Herzegovina dan Republik Kroasia. Meskipun negara-negara ini memiliki undang-undang dan dokumen hukum yang memadai yang mengatur partisipasi politik perempuan, situasi secara teori masih sangat memprihatinkan. Dalam makalah ini, kami memberikan tinjauan tentang kerangka hukum tersebut dalam studi kasus, setelah itu kami menganalisis status representasi perempuan dalam politik saat ini melalui metode utama kajian pustaka. Data dikumpulkan melalui sumber primer dan sekunder. Sumber utama didasarkan pada penelitian kualitatif dari pekerjaan sebelumnya, meta-analisis dan tinjauan literatur yang komprehensif sementara data sekunder dikumpulkan dari halaman web resmi dari komisi pemilu yang relevan dari Bosnia dan Herzegovina dan Republik Kroasia, dengan penekanan pada pendekatan metode campuran dan kecil. -n perbandingan. Kami sampai pada kesimpulan bahwa kedua negara memiliki kerangka hukum yang kuat untuk memastikan tingkat partisipasi perempuan yang lebih tinggi, tetapi kebangkitannya di dunia politik saat ini masih belum ada. Terakhir, kami menghubungkan hasil perempuan terpilih dengan Society 5.0

Kata kunci: representasi perempuan; partisipasi politik; Bosnia dan Herzegovina; Republik Kroasia; Masyarakat 5.0

Introduction

Verba, Sidney; Horman, Nie (1972) argue that „political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that ... aim at influencing the government, either by affecting the choice of government personnel or by affecting the choices made by government personnel“ and it sees participation as influencing attempts. Woman's participation in politics started in 1893 when woman of New Zealand fought and won the battle for their rights. Since then, woman of many states won battles as well. Now, it is perceived as normal and logical that woman participate in politics, to vote, to be member of the parliament or even to become president of the state. This paper offers analysis of legal framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republic of Croatia in terms of ensuring political participation of woman on the elections. Furthermore, statistical presentation of female representation in those states will be offered, followed by the connection between woman's representation in today's politics with Society 5.0.

Politics has traditionally been reserved for men, meaning it has been very difficult for women to enter at the highest level. The progress in gender equality in politics has been uneven so far and significant differences exist among states and regions“ (Jakešević, Ružića; Đana, Luša, 2021). The authors conducted excellent research and review of the challenges of greater participation of women in politics, focusing on how two international entities – the UN and the EU – contribute to overcoming the gender gap in politics and whether their activities have influenced increased participation of women in politics. The results of their research are essential to look at this topic from a broader perspective.„All until the mid-20th century, women were almost completely excluded from diplomatic practice and in the majority of states were considered inappropriate diplomatic agents.... Only in the 20 th century things started to change and women began to be appointed to diplomatic positions as a regular practice“ (ibid,2021: 35). There are different approaches to women's participation in politics, and some countries are more advanced than others. As one of the positive examples, the authors singled out Sweden. „In the modern age, Sweden is again pushing the boundaries in terms of the promotion of equal rights, regardless of gender, in decision-making and the inclusion of women in leading positions in the government... By such moves, Sweden not only promotes gender equality as the goal itself, but also the idea and the belief that gender mainstreaming can bring about positive impact in terms of achieving overall political objectives. Currently (December 2020), its 22-member Government office consists of 10 men and 12 women, who lead ministries such as finance, foreign affairs, employment, education or gender equality“ (ibid, 2021: 40-41). Regarding further research, the authors found that women are not generally represented in politics in most countries worldwide and international organizations such as the UN and the EU.

According to Hitachi and the University of Tokyo Joint Research Laboratory „On January 22, 2016, the Government of Japan released the 5th Science and Technology Basic Plan. The plan proposes the idea of 'Society 5.0', a vision of a future society guided by scientific and technological innovation. The intention behind this concept is described as follows: 'Through

an initiative merging the physical space (real world) and cyberspace by leveraging ICT to its fullest, we are proposing an ideal form of our future society: a 'super-smart society' that will bring wealth to the people. The series of initiatives geared toward realizing this ideal society are now being further deepened and intensively promoted as 'Society 5.0' (H-UTokyo Lab., 2018: xi). Describing this concept, it can be pointed out how „Society 5.0 is a model to communicate the government's vision of a future society to industry and the general public. This model was the culmination of numerous discussions among experts from various fields. It was also based on research into the history of technology and social development“ (ibid, 2018: xii). We are particularly interested in the concept of Society 5.0 from the aspect of reforms and creating opportunities to create an inclusive society that meets different needs and preferences, which is to enable greater participation of women in politics.

In order to structure our text, the research will be divided into four additional sections after the *Introduction*. The second section, *Methods*, we will explain the research methods used in this paper. The next section, entitled *Results and discussion*, will bring an overview of the legal framework that regulates women's participation in politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia. The fourth chapter, *E-participation in the Society 5.0*, will show us how certain elements from the concept of Society 5.0 were used to enable greater participation of women in the politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia. The last section, also the *Conclusion*, will provide a summary of the research and a review of the total collected material and the analysis results.

Methods

The central theory of this research is Society 5.0 theory. In addition to the views already provided on this theory in the Introduction, it is necessary to point out some other views. According to Serpa, Sandro and Ferreira, Carlos M. „Society 5.0 proposes to deepen the potential of the individual technology relationship in the promotion of the improvement of the quality of life of all people through a super smart society, is an extremely recent concept as a guiding social development that can have a profound impact in societies at all levels, such as quality of life and sustainability“ (Serpa, Sandro; Carlos M., Ferreira, 2018). Salgues explains Society 5.0 „as the integration between social of intelligence, physical space and cyberspace (internet). The concept of Society 5.0 combines the history of human civilization, starting from the huntergatherer society, the agricultural society, industrial society and information society. Society 5.0 is also very closely related to the completion of social work that is dominant, involving more sophisticated technology“ (Salgues, Bruno (2018) according to Mashur, Razak; Hidayat, Muhammad; Launu, Ansir; Kasuna, Aditya Halim Perdana 2019). Ultimately the main goal of Society 5.0 will be to operate the systems we have throughout society in an integrated fashion for the benefit of society as a whole (H-UTokyo Lab., 2018: 2).

Data was collected through primarily and secondary sources. Primarily sources were based on the qualitative research of previous work, meta-analysis and comprehensive literature reviews while secondary data was collected from official webpages from relevant election commissions from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia, with emphasis on the mixed-methods approach and small-n comparison.

Results and discussion

Legal framework that regulates woman's participation in politics

In the twenty years, Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) dedicated a lot of efforts in order to develop domestic legal and institutional, as well as political framework so that it can assure implementation of gender equality principle. However, as it is case with electoral minority rights, this effort remained only in theory and legal framework but its implementation in practice still requires a lot of actual work by the state bodies and relevant authorities. Another evidence that supports argument how B&H domestic and international mechanisms are not harmonized is that Electoral Law of B&H is not complied with international standards on equal presentation of males and females (at least 40%) in decision making bodies.

Institutionalized mechanism for gender questions are divided on four levels, from the highest:

- State level (Parliamentary assembly of B&H – Committee of Gender equality in B&H; Council of ministries B&H; Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees B&H – Agency for gender equality B&H);
- Entity and level of Brcko District (House of Representatives of the Federation of B&H(FB&H) Parliament – Committee on Gender equality), House of People's of the FB&H Parliament – Committee on Gender Equality), National Assembly of Republic of Srpska – Committee for Equal Opportunities) Assembly of Brcko district (Committee for gender questions);
- Cantonal level: Assemblies of Cantons (Committees for gender questions), Governments of 10 cantons in FB&H, Coordinational Board/Cantonal Boards for gender questions;
- Local level: City Councils/Assemblies (Board/Commission for Gender questions) – Office of the Mayor, Municipality Councils (Board/Commission for gender questions) – Office of the Mayor.

For this paper, the most relevant domestic Law in B&H is the Electoral Law of B&H. It stipulates that on every elections for legislative bodies, electoral rights have citizens of B&H

(he/she) signed in the Electoral list. By analyzing Law, there is a conclusion that mentioned does not conduct provisions of direct discrimination of woman/men when it comes to the process of candidacy and elections to the government bodies. This Law also has one specific provision (Article 4.19) that obligates political parties to ensure at least 1/3 of underrepresented gender (prescribed quota) in the prescribed places while compiling candidate lists, but also it does not limit the time application of mentioned. Furthermore, this Law obliges Central electoral commission to ensure at least 1/3 of underrepresented gender while compiling municipality electoral commissions and electoral boards. However, this provision is not defined regarding members of the Central Electoral Commission that is the most responsible for legal implementation of all electoral activities. Besides this Law, relevant legal instruments/laws are Annex I of the B&H Constitution, Constitution of Federation of BiH and Constitution of RS as well as Gender Action Plan for B&H (GAP).

Considering the Republic of Croatia, the analysis began with the Constitution. According to the Constitution, „Freedom, Equality, National and Gender Equality, Peace, Social Justice, Respect for Human Rights, Inviolability of Property, Conservation of Nature and the Human Environment, Rule of Law and Democratic Multiparty System are the highest values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia“ (Croatian Parliament, 2014: article 3). As can be seen from the Constitution, the Republic of Croatia has included gender equality in the highest values of the state and society. Accordingly, the Constitution defines the possibility and equal participation and representation of women in all social and political life spheres in the country and abroad.

The next important document is the Gender Equality Act. The Law was passed for the first time in 2003, while in 2008 and 2017 it was amended. The Gender Equality Act elaborates the human rights and fundamental freedoms established by the Constitution and establishes general bases for the protection and promotion of gender equality as fundamental values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia and defines and regulates protection against gender discrimination. The Law defines the concepts of gender equality, gender discrimination, direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment, and special measures. One of its main goals is to combat discrimination based on sex in a number of social areas in which it occurs. Therefore, the following areas to which the Law applies have been identified: Employment and work; Education; Political parties; Media; Official statistics (Office for Gender Equality, s.a.). This Law establishes institutional mechanisms for achieving gender equality, the establishment and competence of bodies to ensure its implementation at the state and local levels. Also, the Law determines the mechanisms for the protection of the principle of equality and elaborates the methods of judicial protection, compensation for damages in civil proceedings, and defines the burden of proof (ibid.). The Law in question also attributed a minimum representation of both sexes in political and public decision-making bodies of at least 40%.

Although there is a constitutional and legal definition of gender equality in all segments of society, so in politics - practice shows a different reality in Croatia. In Croatia, women are generally

less present in politics than men. Although so far, they have held some of the highest political positions in the country, such as President of State, Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, Minister of Education. But such participation is too rare. The extent to which women are represented in politics will be analyzed in the next part of the research. It should be noted here that there are some critical factors, such as less interest of women in participating in political life, but the reasons for this are beyond the context of this research.

Data on woman's representation in B&H politics

According to the 2013 census, approximately 51% of B&H population are woman (statistika.ba). Regardless, its representation in society as well as in the politics is still not on the sufficient level. Higher participation in politics would be out of significant importance for the entire society. This chapter of paper will give an in depth overview of woman's participation in B&H politics.

Statistics from 2008 Local elections shows that electoral body was consisted from 1.201.519 (51,3%) of woman and 1.140.622 (48%) man, but registered candidates were 2.179 (35%) woman and 5.050 (65%) man. Out of this, 109 (20,15%) of woman was elected and 432 (79,85%) man elected as local officials. As municipality / city mayors, 136 was elected as male mayors and only 4 as female mayors (Central Electoral Commission B&H, 2016). Fourteen years after on the 2020 Local elections, out of 425 candidates for municipality mayors / city mayors, only 29 are woman or in percentage speaking, 6,82%. In District Brcko, out of 30.168 candidates for city councils and Assembly, 12.753 are woman or 42.27% (Central Electoral Commission B&H, 2021).

It is important to mention that defined quotas on women on lists do not ensure percentage in the government but for sure it gives higher chances for women. However, in current Council of Ministers there are only two women as members while in the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of B&H, out of 42 members, 11 are woman, which is 26%, according to the official webpage of HoR. In addition to this is devastating statistics on general woman participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we will offer couple of examples furthermore. According to the Gender Center of FB&H, Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have woman as member of tripartite presidency. Since 1994 when President of Federation of B&H as body is established, out of 11 presidents, only one was woman during one mandate (2007-2011). All governments combined and total of 17 ministries, not a single government composition did not have more than two woman ministers. On the local level of government, within 100 cantonal ministers, only 8 were

woman and man dominated as presidents of governments in all 10 cantons in Federation of BiH (Gender Center of FB&H).

Data on woman's representation in the Republic of Croatia politics

For statistical indicators on the representation of women in politics, we will use data from the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The Office for Gender Equality was established on 3 February 2004 based on a Decree of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, as an expert service of the Government of the Republic of Croatia for performing professional and administrative tasks related to gender equality in the Republic of Croatia. It started operating in March 2004. Next, we will analyze the data for the last four elections in the Republic of Croatia.

The representation of women in political parties before the 2016 parliamentary elections was as follows. „According to the data submitted to the Office for Gender Equality by parliamentary political parties, an average of 32% of women are represented in the membership of political parties. There is no significant difference between the parties, the so-called left or center-right. Furthermore, „the above data show that women in all previous parliamentary convocations have been disproportionately represented with regard to their share in the membership of political parties. Although the total number of female candidates for the Croatian Parliament increased from 24% in 2000 to 41% in 2015, in the 2016 parliamentary elections the least women were elected compared to the previous elections in that period - only 15.2%. With 15.2% of the elected representatives in the last elections, Croatia ranked 92nd in the world according to the classification of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and well below the world average of 23%“ (Office for Gender Equality, 2016).

The next elections, the local elections in 2017, brought small positive changes in the representation of women in politics. „These were the first elections in which they have fully implemented the Law on Gender Equality provisions, which establish the obligation to respect the quota of 40% for the underrepresented gender on electoral lists. The number of female candidates has increased compared to local elections in 2013 from 28.2% to 41.6%. The number of councilors in county assemblies increased by 6% compared to the 2013 elections year and 243 (26.8%). No woman has been elected to the position of county prefect, yet the number of deputy prefects increased by 5%, and amounts to 30.9%, ie the deputy prefect is in total 16. Compared to the 2013 elections, the number of mayors has increased from 11 to 13. Given that the city's status has 128 settlements, the share of mayors is 10%. The total number of mayors is 428, of which the mayor is 37 (8.65%). In the previous period, the share was 6.5% or 28 women. The number of councilors in city councils increased by almost 7% compared to the 2013 elections (from 21.4% to 27.1%). The number of municipal councilors increased even more – by almost 11%, from 15.5% to 26.1%“ (Office for Gender Equality, 2017).

The parliamentary elections held in July 2020 improved the share of women Members of Parliament in the Croatian Parliament, but also repeated disregard for the provisions of the Gender Equality Act and compliance with the quota. „Analyzing the implementation of Article 12, paragraph 3 of the Gender Equality Act, which regulates the area of gender representation in public and political decision-making bodies, and electoral lists of parliamentary political parties and platforms, it can be seen that in ten constituencies on 60 electoral lists, 40% quota the share of women was not satisfied in 14 of them (23.3%). After the parliamentary elections, 34 women have the original mandate of a member of the 10th convocation of the Croatian Parliament, which is 22.51%. This is a significant shift compared to the 9th convocation when the share of women MPs with the original mandate was 12.5%. By introducing replacements to elected candidates for positions incompatible with the position of Member of Parliament (MPs), the total number of members of the Croatian Parliament is 46 (30.4%). This is a significant increase compared to the end of the 9th convocation when the share of women MPs was 19.2%. With further changes in the composition of MPs, the number of MPs in April 2021 was 47 (31.1%). Out of 5 vice-presidents of the Croatian Parliament, one is vice-president (20%). Out of a total of 18 members of the Government, 4 are women (22.2%), and all are in the position of ministers“ (Office for Gender Equality, 2020).

Positive trends continued in the next elections. „According to gender-disaggregated data published on the website of the State Election Commission related to the submitted candidacies and the results of the local elections in 2021, a slight increase in the share is visible women and in part related to the submitted candidacies, as well as in part related to the resultslocal elections, compared to the previous local elections in 2017. There was an increase of 9.7% in candidacies for the position of deputy mayor, ie mayor, as well as an increase of 9.5% for the position of county perfect since after the local elections held in May this year in the Republic of Croatia, the function of county prefect is held by two women, while in the previous four-year period it was not any woman in that position“ (Office for Gender Equality, 2021).

Although positive trends regarding the participation and representation of women in politics are currently at work in Croatia, the overall figures are unsatisfactory, and much more time and effort will be needed to ensure that women are adequately represented in politics.

E-participation in the Society 5.0

According to the Cabinet Office Government of Japan, Society 5.0 is “A human-centered society that balances economic advancement with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyber space and physical space.” For purpose of this paper, we will perceive Society 5.0 in a manner of woman’s representation in politics, more precisely, its online campaigns during elections in B&H and Republic of Croatia. The best way to define internet-based political participation is if it is understood as electronic (e) participation, meaning that includes formally

institutionalized mechanisms of use and informal civic engagement according to Linder, Sandra M; Emerson, A.M; Heffton, B.; Shelvin, E (2016). New technology is having big effect on ongoing political activities in advanced industrial societies on many ways, including offer of new participation channels or modification of the existing ones. Internet has altered structure of political participation and extend spectrum of future and possible activities related to politics according to Anduiza, Eva; Cantijoch, Marta; Gallego, Aina (2009). Social media, as mostly used tool of the internet is changing the way people are participating generally and in politics. This is happening due to connection between individuals and voters with political interests of specific political party or movement. Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram or even Snapchat are used by many politicians and organizations with many goals. Some of them are to mobilize potential voters, to spread their messages or simply to be in touch with citizens. Also, Anduiza et al (2009:23) argues that it is crucial to understand that influence which Internet can have on political participation is related with different forms of mentioned participation, as well as the idea that intensity of the participation can be affected both by participating users and non-users. Traditional media often share the social media content (Facebook posts, Tweets, etc.) and it is valued as legitimate statements by politicians.

Some authors, such as Linder, Sandra M; Emerson, A.M; Heffton, B.; Shelvin, E (2016) make a connection between representative democracy and e-democracy in terms of criticism waves. They also state that in terms of technical structure of the Internet, it can combine both traditional and new modes of communication. In this sense, Internet is becoming a strong relationship connecting many forms of communication such as interpersonal and public forms. Also, Dalton, Russel (2017) argues that election campaigns are using internet as communication tool, reforms of public administration in many countries are expanding the eGovernment.

According to the OECD (2018: 24), global Internet penetration rate is about 45% for women, as compared to the approximately 51% for man, meaning that there is 250 million fewer woman than men online. However, as the OECD reports, there is some improvement in the gap between 2013 and 2017 in developed economics such as Europe. Woman's political representation in media is B&H is unfortunately still on the low or poor level. This means that when media report on some female politician, it usually reports on her family and private life as well as looks. There is an ongoing debate on female vs male representation in media where difference is made when media often neglects female politicians, even in cases when there is enough female candidates (UNDP, 2019: 50).

Infohouse has conducted research in 2014 on female representation in media prior to 2014 elections, based on most-read daily newspapers and two magazines in B&H. Their findings show us that in 11% cases; only photography of political female representative is published, without text while total of 47% of articles was published without photography of female representative (Infohouse, 2014: 10). In total number of analyzed articles, only in 25% of cases, female candidates were in the primary text focus, compared to 72% of articles where candidates were in the secondary

of tertiary text focus (ibid, 2014: 11). Additionally, this research showed that female representation was presented only throughout couple of sentences. The highest number of articles (161) on female candidates are presented on the smallest amount of newspaper space, up till 1/8 of the entire page (ibid, 2014: 17). Furthermore, this research imposes one big question: Would 2014 elections have different results if media gave equal space to both male and female candidates? In line with this it is important to mention that there have been more than 300 female candidates to the House of Representatives Parliamentary Assembly B&H out of which only 10 were elected (6 directly and 4 via compensational mandates) (ibid, 2014: 25).

Due to all of the above mentioned, female politicians in B&H decided to use more social networks such as Facebook and Instagram to present their everyday activities as politicians. On this way, they enhance higher representation online. For example, four female politicians from party Naša stranka, namely Sabina Čudić and Nasiha Pozder (elected for House of Representatives of FB&H Parliament on 2018 Elections) and Irma Baralija and Boška Čavar (elected for Mostar City Council on 2020 Elections) used social media Facebook and Twitter to promote its campaign. Being active there helped them to win elections and secure seats. However, there is still enormous lack of data on media coverage of female representation in politics in B&H. This is mostly due to the fact that media in B&H does not take female politicians seriously as males, which is why female political representatives use accounts on social media to promote its campaigns. Even after being elected, politicians continue to use accounts on social media to maintain its power and electorates. Authors of this paper strongly believe that in the near future, politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Croatia will be more and more oriented towards principles of Society 5.0 that was proven to be a good tool when it comes to the political representation and elections.

Through social media, two-way communication is also enabled, which provides insight into the opinion of the electorate, and politicians can communicate their own policies and themselves create the desired image with the target public (media impression). The use of social networks as a tool and the frequency of their use is also visible in the Croatia, where, for example, analyzing the 2014/2015 presidential campaign, after which Croatia got its first female president in history, “significantly more statements were published on social networks than in daily newspapers” as stated by Šimunjak, Maja; Čorić Sinčić, Dubravka; Brecic, Ružica (2017). During the term of office of the President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović was extremely active on social networks, and she especially used them in the election campaign for the second term, 2019. Although she was not elected, she still has great popularity on Facebook and has 715,620 followers, while just 109,613 people follow the current president, Zoran Milanović, according to Senjak, Josip (2021). Grabar Kitarović through her posts has a relevant visibility and interaction with public, which is important for social and political work.

For our research, relevant survey was conducted in 2016 by Harvard University in collaboration with Facebook, with sample of 531 women members of parliament from 107 countries around the world, on how they use social media. The study confirms that social media

leads to the political equalization of male and female politicians because unlike other resources (e.g. traditional media), women have exactly the same possibility for the representation. For this reason, more than 85 percent of women politicians use social media to communicate with their constituents. Those women politicians who considered themselves as well represented as men were much more active on social media than those who did not, and also spoke more about the problem of inequality and gender equality. At the same time, the study showed that opposition politicians or members of smaller political parties are much more active on social networks than those in the ruling parties (Womenpoliticalleaders.org, 2016).

Regarding above stated, in Croatia, it is evident that women politicians who are more on the political periphery ensure their visibility by using social networks. Such is the case with former Prime Minister Jadranka Kosor, who regularly publishes her political opinions and comments on public life on Twitter, where she is followed by 30,000 people, which is a respectable number considering that according to the reports, in Croatia, the number of potential users who can be reached on Twitter is 129,000 users, while Facebook has 1.80 million reachable users (DataReportal, 2021). Kosor opened her profile in 2021 when she was expelled from the party (Croatian Democratic Union) she chaired, but was still a member of the Croatian Parliament, and today she uses Twitter as a platform to express her views and actively participate in the political arena.

As an example of good practice for facilitating e-participation, we can highlight projects to connect and empower women politicians which are implemented in Croatia, for example – the initiative of the Croatian Community of Counties, which organized together with the advertising agency “dAgency”, education on the importance of online communication for women active in local and regional politics. This is a very good example of the "bottom-up approach" because the implementation of gender equality policies at the national level depends on its implementation at the local level, as Blažanović, Nikolina (2021) wrote.

Conclusion

The research showed that globally, regionally, and at the level of the analyzed countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia), there is awareness and regulations that encourage equal participation and representation of women in politics. Moreover, some countries have managed to achieve this equality (this study cites the example of Sweden, but there are certainly other countries that have achieved a satisfactory level of equality). In contrast, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia have yet to do so.

The framework we applied as research design was centrally set within the Society 5.0 concept through which we sequenced elements that enable greater participation of women in politics. Of course, the concept of 5.0 itself is much broader. It includes many more analytical possibilities, but it was beneficial for this research, and we consider its use justified.

Research has shown that the new technologies described in the Society 5.0 concept, their prevalence, and the possibility of two-way communication significantly contribute to greater visibility and opportunities for women to express their views, engage in socially significant issues and participate more in political life.

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