



THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES INTER-FACTION UNION

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EXPERT DISCUSSION: WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN ELECTION SYSTEM CONTEXT



A Gender Expert Workshop «Provision of women representation in the context of an electoral system» was held in Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on February 3 with participation of the Equal Opportunities Caucus. The event was held upon an initiative of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Members of the Caucus **Maria Ionova, Iryna Friz, Iryna Suslova** and **Aliona Babak** took part in the event, as well as European MPs, representatives of central authorities, non-governmental organizations, international and national experts in electoral law and gender equality. In the course of the discussion, pros and cons of legislative quotas, included in Constitution and/or electoral legislation were mentioned and also party quotas, voluntarily adopted by political parties; peculiarities of quotas application in electoral systems with closed and open lists. A number of *conclusions and recommendations were formed based on the discussion on further steps to extend women participation in politics, legislative changes*. Please see a summary document by the link (in English).

<https://goo.gl/GvSqaP>

THE GOVERNMENT APPROVED ACTION PLAN “WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY”

Cabinet of Ministers adopted **National action plan on fulfillment of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security”**. The plan shall be implemented by 2020.

Ministry of Social Policy developed a draft act in order to fulfill requirements of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at Fourth World Conference on Women.

The aim of the National action plan “Women, Peace and Security” is **to provide stable peace and conflict resolution with due regard to gender factor; promotion of women active participation in peace-building processes; prevention and combating gender based violence; rehabilitation of conflict-stricken persons, including IDPs.**

Adoption of the Plan will enable: assessment of war conflict influence on the national system of human rights provision, in particular protection and rehabilitation of gender based violence victims, assistance provision; participation of women in peace-building and prevention of conflicts.

Besides, the Plan will help to stir up peace building and protection activities of state and non-governmental organizations which can contribute to conflict prevention and resolution; improve qualification of state servants, officials of local self-government, military personnel, and representatives of law-enforcement bodies.

The program will provide conditions for more active participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, establishment of a culture of peace; raising public awareness; establishment of comprehensive conflict victims assistance system.

The Ministry of Social Policy shall annually by March 1 inform the Government on the National action plan completion status.

EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE ON SUPPORT OF GENDER EQUALITY IN UKRAINE



Co-head of the Equal Opportunities Caucus **Mariia Ionova** met U.S. Senator Thomas Daschle. The meeting was organized with assistance of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Representatives of non-governmental organization and experts in gender equality took part in the event.

During the event, Senator Thomas Daschle, ex-head of U.S. Senate majority made a speech, as well as Swedish Ambassador to Ukraine Andreas von Beckerath. Resident Director of National Democratic Institute in Ukraine Mary O'Hagan made a presentation of sociological research on attitudes to women political participation in Ukraine.

Mariia Ionova informed about the *Caucus priorities, which include development of legal amendments for provision of gender equality in electoral process, integration of gender equality issues in peace-building missions; gender-sensitive budgeting; cooperation with women deputies of local councils and women who were nominated but not elected.* In order to provide better planning and coordination of work Mariia Ionova suggested to *establish a public gender council.* The idea was supported by the participants. NDI expressed its willingness to provide technical support to such a council.

Participants stressed the importance of U.S. And EU cooperation in support of gender equality in Ukraine. It was also stated that Ukraine should be more active in extension of women participation in politics. According to Ambassador Andreas von Beckerath, even in post-Soviet states share of women-MPs is higher than in Ukraine. For example, there are 27% women-deputies in Belarusian parliament, 23% in Kyrgyzstan, 23% in Uzbekistan, 19% in Moldova. In Sweden, almost half of MPs are women, as well as half of Ministers.

It was mentioned that Sweden achieved such results not only due to quotas, but also due to comprehensive work to change public attitude. Role of men in promotion of gender equality is especially important. De-facto gender equality benefits not only women, but society at large.

“Results of public opinion survey on attitudes to women political participation in Ukraine helped to demolish some views on participation of women in politics; identify barriers faced by women and ways to overcome them; find mechanisms to extend women political participation”

Mary O'Hagan
Resident Director of National Democratic Institute in Ukraine

The survey proved that more and more citizens believe that share of women in parliament should be 40 or 50%; confirmed importance of quota for extension of women political participation; demonstrated persistence of stereotype attitudes to men and women in politics.

SHARING EXPERIENCE OF GENDER EQUALITY PROVISION AT LOCAL LEVEL



Workshop on effectiveness of gender equality mechanisms at local level in Ukraine was held in Kharkiv on February 19. The workshop was organized by OSCE/ODIHR in co-operation with the Equal Opportunities Caucus. Caucus members **Mariia Ionova**, **Iryna Lutsenko** and **Liliia Hrynevych** took part. Participants discussed the current situation and *ways to make actions, providing equality of men and women, more effective*. Examples of similar action sin Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Serbia, were explored.

Mariia Ionova, Caucus co-chair, said: “Strengthening and institutionalizing gender mechanisms is essential to ensure that the needs and concerns of both women and men are taken into account. These mechanisms play a great role in identifying existing gender gaps. The parliament of Ukraine is paying particular attention to this issue.”

PREPARATION OF COMPLEX AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The working group responsible for preparation of comprehensive amendments to legislature securing gender equality, continues its work on proposals and amendments to the Law of Ukraine on ensuring equal rights and opportunities of women and men. On January 15, the working group together with **Iryna Suslova**, the head of subcommittee of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on gender equality and non-discrimination and a member of the Equal Opportunities, participated in a regular meeting. Joint discussion focused on opportunities of securing equal rights and opportunities for men and women in election processes. The experts exchanged with opinions and proposals on **improvement of the electoral law and ensuring efficient quota mechanisms in order to extend women political involvement on local and national level**.

On **February 25**, the working group continued its work with the amendments to the Law by discussing and approving proposals for amendments to the Law “On equal rights and opportunities for men and women” and respectfully to the Electoral Law. The meeting was joined by the Representative of the Verkhovna Rada on Human Rights, the representatives of the Ministry of the Social policies, UNDP Women, Council of Europe, Secretary of Venice Commission in Ukraine, Representative of program “Rada”.



MARIA IONOVA ON GENDER POLICIES IN HER TALK AT “HROMADSKJE RADIO”

In the recent interview for “Hromadske Radio”, the co-head of the Equal Opportunities Caucus, Maria Ionova, shared with the listeners about the activity priorities and the greatest achievements. The MP underlined that the Caucus stands as a successful example of cooperation of parliamentarians. Representatives of different political groups united for a common goal – to create legislative support for ensuring equal rights and opportunities to men and women. Among all the requirements to fulfill while moving towards the EU, fostering of gender policies is of a particular importance, mentioned Maria Ionova. Therefore, it is essential to assure harmonization of Ukrainian legislature regarding protection of women right and ensuring equal opportunities in order to comply with the EU norms. Among the greatest achievements of the Caucus, Ms Ionova underlined passing the law on gender quotas for local election, which was already practiced during recent local election. Worth mentioning is also extensive work done on ratifying Istanbul Convention. Concluding, the MP emphasized that one shall talk about possibility of choice rather than limiting it gender tags. Therefore, this will allow securing diversity of approach for problem solving and will increase efficiency of taken decisions.

Find the interview (in Ukrainian) at: <http://goo.gl/KN5UMw>

“INVISIBLE BATTALION”: RESEARCH RESULTS

The Ukrainian Women Fund has officially published results of the research “**Invisible Battalion**” on women participation in anti-terroristic operation. The study was conducted by expert sociologists with the support of the Ukrainian Women's Fund and UN Women. Among major goals, “Invisible Battalion” aimed to assess the integration of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The research included survey of 42 women participating in anti-terroristic operation and number of prominent experts, including co-head of Equal Opportunities Caucus, Maria Ionova. Therefore, the analysis reflected gender situation covering different areas: society, political and military environment.

The results of the study highlighted several major problems affecting women participating in military actions. Among all it is restricted access of women in decision-making processes within armed forces, lack of official legal status of military servant and underdeveloped support of separate issues on the national level.

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Maria Ionova:

The problem of improvement of status of female-soldiers is a part of rather complex question. The major problem lies in underrepresentation of women in decision-making processes, in particular at the national level

Find out more on the research (in Ukrainian) at: <http://goo.gl/r4W62d>

INCREASING OF WOMEN’S ROLE IN PEACEMAKING PROCESSES



The Equal Opportunities Caucus continues its active cooperation with UN Women. On February 8, the co-heads of the Union, **Olena Kondratiuk** and **Maria Ionova** met Anastasia Dyvynska, UN Women Gender Issues Expert and Hanna Kvit, UN Women Expert on the issues of women, peace and security. The discussion focused around the main question of *securing rights to women at the war zone at the Eastern Ukraine*. Over the meeting, the participants raised the question of possible *ways of women engagement in decision-making processes in the area of national security*. However, along with the mentioned it is also important to increase women’s role in peacemaking process, as well as combat of direct and indirect discrimination of women military servants. Only by taking complex and coordinated actions in the legislative and executive field, it can lead to solution of the mentioned problems. The Caucus together with the UN Women aims to continue their cooperation and to put common efforts in order to provide efficient implementation of “Women, peace, security” action plan.

The activities are of particular significance in regard of approved action plan aimed for implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 “Women, peace, security”, which was respectively supported by the members of the Caucus.

Combating violence

PROMOTION OF EFFICIENT LEGALISLATURE AS A PREVENTIVE TOOL AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

February 18, Equal Opportunities Caucus members, **Maria Ionova** and **Iryna Lutsenko**, participated in the meeting on harmonization of provisions of the Law “On combat and prevention of domestic violence”. The discussion was joint by representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Policies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Council of Europe in Ukraine and La Strada.

The MPs, Maria Ionova and Iryna Lutsenko expressed their support in favor of proposed amendments to the Law regarding creation of shelters and emergency holiness for women suffering domestic violence. Iryna Lutseko underlined key provisions of the Convention of the Council of Europe and the Istanbul Convention on prevention and combat of domestic violence. Following the Conventions, it is essential to secure protection, prevention and punishment for domestic violence, hence, leading to its gradual elimination. The MP indicated that 15 thousand of women die each year in Ukraine because of domestic violence. Therefore, creation of shelters shall be necessarily followed by launching of emergency hotlines. The hotlines will not only provide essential support to the victims, but will also help to compile statistical data for preparation of national policies on domestic violence prevention.



The participants discussed possibilities of a state support to creation of the network of shelters of different types of property. The consensus was reached regarding need of creation of legislative foundation for providing support to the victims by different parties (civic organizations, private sector, local and national authorities).



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