

PARALLEL NGO ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN CANDIDATES IN SLOVENIAN EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN 2009

Women's Lobby in Slovenia took active part in the EWL 50-50 Campaign for the election of the European parliament in 2009.

Slovenia has 7 seats in the European parliament. The voting system is 100% proportional. All country is just one electoral unite. The voters can give, to one name on the list they vote for, their preferential vote.

Legal quota in place obliges all lists to 40% minimum quota for men and women and at least one candidate of each sex has to be represented in the first half of the list (meaning that between the first three names at least one has to be a woman).

In elections 2004, Slovenia had elected 43% of women MEP-s (three out of 7 MEP-s that Slovenia has in the European parliament). The turnout was low – bellow 30%, and the expectations for 2009 elections were not very optimistic either.

Only 3 big parliamentary parties were able to send two MEP-s in the European parliament in 2004, and one smaller got one seat. Other parties did not get anybody. The voters casted their preferential votes, but gave them mainly to male candidates, without changing the order of the elected MEP-s suggested to the voters by party leaderships.

During the last five years, Slovenian parliamentary parties became smaller and more numerous. There was an obvious danger that if two bigger parties do not put their first woman candidate at the second place, and the smaller parties do not put their first women candidates on the first place of their lists, the number of elected women MEP-s would diminish. This is why it was crucial to organize strong bottom up pressure on all parliamentary parties.

Women's Lobby of Slovenia decided to organize and lead so called parallel electoral campaign, which consisted of the following elements:

- 1. In September 2008 we lobbied important male allies to sign their support to the EWL 50-50 campaign, and got the support from the signatures from the President of the republic and from the Prime Minister to be.**
- 2. Beginning of March, 2009, we sent an open letter to all parliamentary party leaders, asking from them to include gender aspects in their party manifestos for this election and to give to their women candidates eligible places on their party lists – first or at least second place on their list.**
- 3. We published the supplement named: "Let us Decide Together" on EU gender equality challenges in 80.000 copies in the main newspaper Delo and distributed it with this daily on March 7, 2009**
- 4. Street actions –activists were handing out additional 10.000 copies of the supplement "Let us decide together" before public debates on gender aspects of EU policies which we organized in 6 bigger cities throughout March and April 2009.**
- 5. From May 2009, we started a special media campaign, with the support of several mainstream printed and electronic media, in order to encourage the voters to give their preferential vote to the woman candidate of their choice on the lists they intend to vote for. The peak of this media campaign was reached in the last 15 days before the election, held on June 7, 2009.**

OUTCOMES OF THE EWL&WOMEN'S LOBBY OF SLOVENIA 50-50 CAMPAIGN¹

The Manifestos for EU election did not bring much concrete promises on gender equality issues, with one exemption – the party, which came first on national elections in 2008, Social Democrats, had a special part of the Manifesto on this theme.

Not one woman candidate got the first place on the list of any significant party. Out of 12 lists, only one had a woman on the top of the list. This party unfortunately gathered less than 1% of all votes.

The biggest parliamentary party (SD – PES) and two smaller non parliamentary parties (NSi – EPP, and KSS - Christian Socialists), presented the lists with 4 female and 3 male candidates. Five lists had a woman candidate not only on the second, but also on the third place, trying to bluff how much they care for gender equality.

The women of all parties got at least the second place on the lists, this is why 2 women were elected from the two parties which won 2 seats in the European parliament. SDS from EPP and SD from PES. Never the less, Slovenia has now only 27% of women MEP-s, in comparison with 2004 when it had nearly 43%. Without our campaign it might have happened that the first women candidates would have been placed only on the third place of their party lists and this would mean that not one woman would have been elected

The parallel campaign was successful in demonstrating that the discrimination against women candidates in elections in fact does not come from the voters, but from the male dominated party leaderships. Our figures in the Table 2 show strong positive shift in voters' behavior. Their support to women candidates at least doubled in all lists. In some parties the share of the preferential votes given to women even jumped from 2.6% to nearly 26% (Example of NSi, EPP sister party).

One has to have in mind that our parallel campaign was very limited by funds, and we can thank for the success only to our skillful strategy and the fact that some mainstream media which helped us to bring this issue in the mainstream electoral campaign in the crucial last 14 days of the party campaign. Still our campaign was not strong enough to encourage enough voters to correct this bias and discriminatory attitude of the party leaderships. Not one woman candidate from all lists gathered as many preferential votes as the first men on each list.

PREFERENTIAL VOTES FOR WOMEN CANDIDATES IN ELECTIONS 2009 IN SLOVENIA – FACTS AND FIGURES

There were 339 955 preferential votes for all lists, out of which 62.806 or 18.47% for women.

¹ This campaign was coordinated by a special team of the Women Lobby of Slovenia and led by Sonja Lokar from the CEE Network for Gender Issues

In comparison to the elections in 2004, when the total of all preferential votes for all lists was 324.786, and the number of preferential votes for all women was 32.912, one can see essential growth of the share of the preferential votes given to women candidates: from 10.13% in 2004 up to 18.47 % in 2009.

The share of all preferential votes for all list in the total of all votes for all lists was in 2004 74.5%, while in 2009 this share is 75.2%.

Table 1: SHARE OF PREFERENTIAL VOTES FOR WOMEN BY INDIVIDUAL LIST

Name of the list	All votes for the list	All preferential votes for the list	Number of women candidates on the list for 7 seats in the E. parliament	Number of preferential votes for the women on the list	Share of preferential votes for women from all preferential votes for the list
SDS	121.737	89.165	3	14.602	16.4 %
SD	83.440	64.201	4	19.153	29.8 %
ZARES	44.407	36.227	3	3.813	10.5 %
NSI	73.866	57.318	4	14.850	25.9 %
LDS	52.091	43.218	3	2.359	5.4 %
DeSuS	32.469	26.142	3	1.161	4.4 %
SNS	13.043	8.574	3	2.025	23.6 %
SLS	16.293	11.249	3	1.943	17.3 %

Table 2: Comparison with the same lists in 2004

Name of the list	Share of preferential votes for women in the total number of preferential votes for each list	
	2004	2009
SDS	8.4%	16.4%
SD ²	8.0%	29.8%
NSI	2.6%	25.9%
SLS	4.3%	17.3%
SNS	1.4%	26.9%

In conclusion: Slovenia needs to improve its legal positive measures for equality of women in the election for European parliament. Our parallel campaign made possible to put together a cross cutting coalition of all gender equality agents – NGO-s, experts, women's party organizations from all crucial parties, women parliamentarians as well as Governmental Office for Equal Opportunities in Slovenia. This coalition will, as from tomorrow, start to lobby and campaign for the zipper on all lists and for the rule,

² In 2004, this list was named ZLSD (United List of Social Democrats)

that in every election the top of the list should be given to the candidate of the sex, which came second at the former election.

Note:

The data for 2009 were calculated at the bases of informal results of the election from the State Electoral Commission from June 7,2009, at 23.35

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