
**NORTH MACEDONIA'S
ELECTION SYSTEM:**

**HOW TO ENSURE FAIR
REPRESENTATION IN
PARLIAMENT**



February 2022

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како да се обезбеди рамноправна и фер застапеност во Собранието**

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Foreword

This research is part of NDI's Enhancing Electoral Integrity Program which helps strengthen the capacities of civil society and political parties to promote electoral integrity through monitoring, advocacy and reform. In North Macedonia, we aim to bolster the fairness of election processes through stakeholder deliberation.

The National Democratic Institute affirms that inclusive policy dialogue, based on empirical and credible research, is key to any electoral reform. We aim to present policy-makers with credible, scientific data to inform their decision-making.

This research considers possible changes to the electoral model which arguably contributes to a more inclusive and citizen-driven parliament.

North Macedonia's Constitution states that members of parliament are citizen representatives that should vote their conscience (Article 62). And as the constitution prescribes, citizen representation is a cornerstone of representative parliamentary democracy.

Yet, citizens in North Macedonia often feel overlooked by their elected representatives. Arguably, one of the root problems is the perception that MPs are accountable to party leaders because they decide which candidates are on the party lists, thereby reinforcing the perception that party leaders are "constituents of one" for their party's MPs.

The respondents in our focus group research conducted by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research (ISPPJ) highlight that the main arguments for supporting a change to the electoral model are:

- increase of quality of the elected representatives;
- increase of the level of personal responsibility of the candidates and the elected representatives;
- democratization of the political parties; and,
- decrease of the role of the party leaders by increasing the role of the voters in the selection of individual candidates.

Finally, when asked whether a change in the way MPs are elected could contribute to reducing the dependence of MPs from party leaders, half of the respondents agree that a change in the electoral model can contribute to reducing the dependence of the MPs on party leaders. This perception among the citizens is generally unchanged in the last three years.

For citizens to be prioritized by MPs and their political parties, citizens need a greater stake in the electoral process.

We welcome this common effort for citizens to have a greater stake in the electoral process and encourage policy dialogue to that end.

***Robert Scott Heaslet,
Senior Resident Director,
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INTRODUCTION

The election system in the Republic of North Macedonia is among key democracy issues discussed in the country, particularly but not limited to election periods. Those who support changes to the current system refer to undue advantages accruing to big parties/coalitions, lack of inner-party democracy, insufficient personal accountability of the MPs, reduced possibility for the small parties to win seats in parliament, as well as significant number of lost votes because they are given to parties that do not secure seats in parliament.

The subject of this analysis is the electoral model for parliamentary and local elections, both from theoretical aspects in regard to its main features, implementation, advantages and disadvantages, as well as from a practical aspect analysing the effects of a potential change in the electoral model or of some of its components. Political scientist David Farrell refers to ‘the cogs that keep the wheels of democracy properly functioning’¹, while his peer Giovanni Sartori, Italian professor in Political Science, calls them ‘the most manipulative instrument of politics’². The reason for that is the fact that the selection of a certain electoral model could change the political scene in a certain country in regard to the number of parties, the type and stability of the government, the people’s perception of the candidates and the process of voting, as well as many other aspects. Every electoral model has its own components that function as variables, and by changing them the election results change. The selection of a certain type of electoral model that will satisfy all stakeholders and its transposition into electoral legislation requires a comprehensive approach engaging multiple political and civic stakeholders to fashion compromise.

The fundamental goal of this analysis is to assess the impact that change in the electoral model could have on the political scene in the Republic of North Macedonia based on the analysis of parliamentary and local elections results.

The main thesis that this study is trying to prove is the following: *Change in the electoral model will bring about significant changes in the composition of parliament in relation to the distribution of seats among the parties.*

For the purpose of achieving the basic goal of the analysis, apart from the main issue of research, several other working issues will also be reviewed:

- The existing proportional representation electoral model with its components favoring the big parties, i.e., it reduces the number of seats won by small parties, and it makes it more difficult for the parties to get into parliament.
- The introduction of a majority electoral model with plurality voting will result in changes on the political scene, changing the distribution of seats among the parties and coalitions in parliament.
- The First-past-the-post system and the two-rounds system will eliminate almost completely the chances of the small parties to get in parliament.

¹ Farrell, D. “Electoral Systems - A Comparative Introduction”, New York, 2011, p. 2

² Lijphart, A. “Constitutional Choices for New Democracies”. Bo Diamond, L. and Plattner, M. F. (Ed.). “Electoral Systems and Democracies”. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2006, p. 74

- The changing of the existing proportional representation model in regard to the number of electoral districts (from six to one) will bring benefits to the smaller parties and yield greater political diversity in parliament, i.e., more political parties would manage to win at least one MP seat.

- The introduction of an electoral threshold will have negative impact on the smaller parties and their chances to get seats in parliament;

- The D'Hondt formula for allocating seats favours the bigger parties and changing it will improve the proportionality of the election results against the received votes.

- The introduction of open lists will not bring changes in the distribution of seats among the parties/coalitions, but will influence the democratic processes in the parties, such as candidate selection and intra-party democracy.;

- Changing the electoral model for the election of mayors from two to one-round system, will save time and money, and cut down on the political bargaining between the two rounds, but it will have a negative impact on the proportionality of votes and the number of "lost" votes.

- The change in the existing electoral model in regard to the number of electoral districts (from six to one) and in regard to the type of electoral lists (open versus closed) could have an impact on the gender representation at parliament.

- First-past-the-post system and the two-rounds system will also have a negative impact on the representation of women in parliament.

For the purpose of proving the hypothesis, a combination of various methodological approaches are applied, including inductive and deductive methods, comparative method, quantitative analysis method, method of description and compilation method.

1. ELECTORAL SYSTEMS – DEFINITION AND TYPES OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

The electoral system in a more narrow sense, is a technique that ensures translation of the votes of the voters into seats. In other words, “the electoral systems determine how votes are translated into seats”.³ On the other hand, the electoral system in a wider sense represents “a set of rules which regulate the entire electoral process.”⁴ According to this standpoint, “in order to explain one electoral system, we need to take into consideration all components, including the electorate, the electoral legislation, election campaign rules, electoral districts, as well as the formula that is used to translate votes into seats.”⁵ Farrell distinguishes between electoral laws and electoral systems. Electoral laws represent a set of rules regulating the entire electoral process, while electoral systems regulate only the process of voting and determining the winners and losers (how citizens vote, the style of the ballot paper, the method of counting and the final determination of who is elected).⁶ In this study, the term electoral system will be used in its narrow sense, equating it to the term electoral model.

All the different types of electoral systems that exist could be grouped into two basic groups: majority and proportional representation electoral systems. Combining parts of the two types results in a new type of electoral system called mixed electoral system.

1.1 MAJORITY ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

According to the majority electoral systems the right to a seat (in parliament) belongs to the candidate who wins the required majority of votes during the elections⁷. The majority electoral systems are usually implemented in small single-member electoral districts where the voters cast their votes for candidates more than for political parties. The main difference according to which the majority electoral systems are divided is the necessary majority that is required for a certain candidate to win a seat. In theory there are several kinds of majority: 1) **plurality** – the biggest number of votes in regard to the other candidates; 2) **relative majority** - 50% of the total number of votes cast; 3) **absolute majority** - 50% of the total number of registered voters, 4) **qualified majority** – every majority that envisages percentage of votes greater than 50%. In theory and in practice several different kinds of majority electoral systems exist.

³ Sartori, G. “*Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Inquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*”. New York, 1997, p. 3

⁴ Heywood, A. “*Politics*”. Basingstoke, 2007, p. 256

⁵ Grilli di Cortona, P., Manzi, C., Pennisi, A., Ricca, F. and Simeone, B. “*Evaluation and Optimization of Electoral Systems*”. Philadelphia, 1999. p. 5

⁶ Farrell, D. “*Electoral Systems - A Comparative Introduction*”, New York, 2011, p. 3

⁷ Siljanovska-Davkova, G. “*On the Way of Allotment of Electoral Mandates – Electoral Models*”, in “*Constitutionalism, Universalism and Democracy*”, Erasmus University, Rotterdam, 1999, p. 2

1.1.1 The plurality voting electoral system (Plurality Electoral System)⁸

This electoral system is the simplest variant of the majority electoral system recognized by electoral theory and practice⁹. For the needs of this electoral system, the state is usually divided into rather equal single-member electoral districts where the voters have a right to vote for one of the candidates. After the completion of the voting, the seat is won by the candidate who won the plurality, i.e., the biggest number of votes in relation to the other candidates (regardless whether the difference is one or 1,000 votes). "This is the oldest electoral system, dating back at least to the 12th century, and also the simplest."¹⁰ England is the birthplace of this electoral system. Today, even though not as much as in the past, this system is still considered one of the most used electoral systems in the world. The countries that use this system are the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Canada, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and other countries¹¹.

1.1.2 Two-round majority electoral system

This electoral system is the second most frequently used majority electoral system today. The uniqueness of this system is that it envisages a possibility for the candidate that will win a seat to be elected in two rounds of voting. A winner in the first round is considered the candidate that won the needed majority, often absolute or relative majority. If none of the candidates reach the majority required to win (which is often the case), a second round of voting is organized with the participation either of the two candidates who won the biggest number of votes in the first round, or of all the candidates who in the first round won more than a certain legally established percentage. A winner in the second round is considered the candidate that wins the most votes, i.e., more votes than the other candidates. This electoral system is used for electing MPs in parliaments of about 20 countries, among which France, Belarus, Iran, Vietnam, and many African countries. France during the rule of Louis-Napoleon is considered the birthplace of this electoral system.¹²

1.1.3 Alternative vote and additional vote systems

These electoral systems are considered to be some of the most complicated ones. Within the framework of the systems, preferential voting in single-member electoral districts is applied. In the alternative vote system, the voters rank the candidates based on their preference (number 1 for the first choice, 2 for the second choice, etc.). In order to win a seat, a certain candidate needs to have a simple majority of votes (at least 50% of the total number of votes) after counting the first preferences. If none of the candidates manage to get the necessary majority, the candidate with the least votes is eliminated, and their votes are redistributed depending on the second (or next) preference. This process is repeated until one of the candidates reaches the

⁸ This electoral system is also known as the **first-past-the-post system**.

⁹ Karakamiseva, T. "Elections and Electoral Systems". Skopje, 2004, p. 63

¹⁰ Norris, P. "Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior". Cambridge, 2004, p. 42

¹¹ This electoral system is typical for many of the former Commonwealth countries.

¹² Siljanovska-Davkova, G. "On the Way of Allotment of Electoral Mandates – Electoral Models", 1999, p. 2

necessary majority for winning a seat. The alternative vote system today is used in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

The additional vote system is similar to the alternative vote system. The difference lies in the fact that the voters instead of ranking the candidates depending on their preference, have a right to only one “additional” vote (one additional preference). After the initial preferences are counted, if none of the candidates have the required majority, all the candidates with the exception of the two with the most votes are eliminated and their votes are redistributed to the candidate that got the “additional” vote. After the redistribution of the votes, the winner is the candidate with more votes than their opponent. The additional vote system today is not used for electing MPs in any country around the world, and it is usually used for certain local elections.

1.2 PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ELECTORAL SYSTEM

According to the proportional representation model, the seats are allocated according to the votes that are won, that is each actor/list is represented in parliament proportionally to the portion of votes they receive from the electorate¹³. In other words, each party gets the percentage of seats that is proportional to the percentage of votes that the party wins during the elections. The proportional representation electoral systems are usually used in bigger multi-member electoral districts where the voters cast their votes for party lists and not for candidates.

There is a huge number of variations of the proportional representation electoral systems. The main difference according to which one differentiates various proportional representation systems is the electoral formula, i.e., the way in which the seats are allocated depending on the election results.

The most frequently used electoral formulas are the following¹⁴:

a) Electoral quota model (Hare quota) – the total number of votes in the electoral district is divided by the number of seats allocated to that electoral district.¹⁵ According to this model the number of votes won by each party is divided by the electoral quota, and the number of seats for each of the parties is established. In case certain seats are not allocated they are given to the parties with the highest number of remaining votes after the initial allocation of the seats.

b) D'Hondt formula – according to this formula, the number of seats that each party gets is calculated by dividing the total number of votes of all the parties by the common divisor. The common divisor is calculated in the following way: the total sums of all the parties are divided by 1, by 2, by 3 etc. until one reaches the number of available seats. Then, all the scores are lined up based on the value until the scores reach the number of seats of the electoral district, where the last relevant score represents the common divisor. For instance, if 20 seats are allocated to the electoral district then the twentieth highest score is the common divisor. The D'Hondt formula for calculating the results is the most commonly used electoral formula today. Apart

¹³ Ibid, p. 3

¹⁴ There are many various electoral formulas. The text provides an explanation about the ones most frequently used.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 4.

from being used for the election of MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia this formula is also used in other countries like Albania, Denmark, Croatia, Belgium, Austria, The Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, etc.

c) Sainte-Laguë formula – uses the same technique as the D'Hondt formula, but here in order to get the common divisor the sums of all the parties are not divided with every number until reaching the number of available seats, but by every odd number (by 1, by 3, by 5, etc.).

Apart from these electoral formulas there are also others, like the Droop Quota, Hagenbach-Bischoff Quota, Imperiali Quota, etc.

Apart from the electoral formulas, there are also other factors based on which different proportional electoral systems are differentiated like: the size of the electoral district (the entire country is an electoral district, or the country is divided into more smaller electoral districts): the type of the electoral lists (open and closed) and the electoral threshold (minimum percent from the total number of votes that a party has to win in order to get a seat in parliament). By combining these factors, a huge number of various proportional representation electoral systems are created that are implemented today. The two basic models are a party list system and a single transferable vote system.

1.2.1 Party-list proportional representation system

According to this electoral system each party that participates in the elections offers its list of candidates. The number of candidates on each list is equal to the number of seats that are available in the electoral district.¹⁶ After the voting, the number of seats that each party wins is calculated based on one of the electoral formulas, i.e., the number of seats in parliament that each party gets is proportional to its election results.

The party lists electoral system is the most commonly used electoral system today. This electoral system is rather popular in the countries that used to have a socialist political system. In all these countries a certain variation of the party list proportional representation electoral system is implemented, with some differences in the size of the electoral districts, the type of the party lists, the electoral formula, the use of an electoral threshold, etc.

1.2.2 Single transferable vote system

This electoral system is another electoral system that uses preferential voting. According to this electoral system, the state is divided into multi-member electoral districts, and each party nominates as many candidates as available seats in each electoral district (the candidates could be grouped in a party list or each candidate individually). When voting, the voters rank the candidates according to their preference (No. 1 for the first choice, No.2 for the second choice, etc.). Afterwards an electoral formula is used, usually the Droop quota, which determines the minimum number of votes that a candidate needs to win a seat. When a candidate reaches the quota, their remaining votes are transferred to the next preference. If after the votes counting there

¹⁶ Occasionally, the number of candidates on the lists can be smaller than the number of seats available in the electoral district.

are still seats that are not allocated, like in the alternative vote system, the candidate with the least votes is eliminated and their votes are reallocated to the next preference and so on until all the seats are allocated.

One of the main shortcomings of this model, and probably the reason why the model is used only in a small number of cases (for the election of the MPs in the Republic of Ireland, Malta and the upper house of the Australian Parliament), is the fact that it is too complicated to be understood by the electorate¹⁷, as well as very complicated for counting the votes.

1.3 MIXED ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

In an attempt to combine the advantages of the majority and proportional representation electoral systems, the electoral systems experts in the second half of the 20th century developed new hybrid systems, known as mixed electoral systems that represent a combination of certain majority and proportional representation electoral systems.

The mixed electoral systems could be classified into two main groups: **mutually independent systems and mutually dependent systems**. Within the framework of the mutually independent systems, also known as parallel systems, the result in one of the components does not influence the results in the other one, i.e., part of the MPs is elected with the majority electoral system, and the other part through the proportional representation system completely independently (in parallel) one from the other. On the other hand, in the mutually dependent systems (that are considered as “true” mixed electoral systems) the results in one of the components influence the other component, i.e., the majority and proportional representation component of the system are interrelated.¹⁸

1.3.1 Parallel electoral system

The parallel electoral system is a type in which two different types of electoral systems, a majority and a proportional representation, are implemented in parallel and independently from each other, that is the results in one of the systems do not influence the results in the other one. According to this system, part of the MPs are elected with a majority electoral system, and the rest with the proportional representation electoral system. The manner in which the two components of the electoral system are combined vary from case to case. This type of electoral system is used for parliamentary elections in Japan, Mexico, South Korea and other countries.

In regard to the implementation of the parallel model, its influence is linked to the relation between the two components that make the system. If the majority model dominates, then the influence from the implementation of the parallel system is similar to the majority system and vice versa. The introduction of a parallel model is an attempt to reduce the shortcomings from the use of the classic majority and proportional representation electoral systems. This model, due to the proportional component,

¹⁷ Karakamiseva, T. “*Elections and Electoral Systems*”. Skopje, 2004, p. 103

¹⁸ Norris, P. “*Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior* “. Cambridge, 2004, p. 55

shows greater proportionality of the election results in regard to the votes that are won than in the case of the majority models.

Furthermore, the chances for the smaller parties to win seats in parliament, unlike in the case of the majority systems, are greater, if these parties manage to collect sufficient votes within the framework of the proportional component. In reference to the proportional systems, this model has shown greater stability of the majority and more efficient decision-making process due to the lesser fragmentation of the political scene, which is result of the domination of the big parties in the majority component of the model.

1.3.2 Mixed-member proportional representation (“The German Model”)

According to this electoral system, voters vote on two ballots. On the first one each voter votes for one of the candidates in single-member electoral districts. The winner in these districts is decided according to one of the majority electoral systems, usually the plurality voting electoral system, that is the seat goes to the candidate who wins the most votes.

On the second ballot the voters vote for one of the party lists, in several multi-member electoral districts or in certain cases the entire country as one electoral district. The results from the second ballot are calculated by using the party-list proportional representation electoral system and they determine the final number of seats that are won by each of the parties at the end of the electoral process. After the votes are counted each party gets as many additional seats as the difference between the number of seats won in the single-member districts and the number of seats that the party should win according to the proportional representation voting. For example, if a certain party wins 15 seats with the voting in a single-member district, but it is due 20 seats according to the voting on the party lists, the party will get additional 5 seats in order to reach the number of 20 seats in parliament.

1.3.3 The single non-transferable vote system

This mixed electoral system takes over from the proportional representation systems the multi-member electoral districts, while from the majority system the plurality necessary for the candidates to win a seat. What is interesting about this system is the fact that a party can offer more than one candidate in a given electoral district, and the candidates from the same party compete against each other. The voter has a right to cast their vote for only one candidate. After counting the votes, the candidates who won the most votes (as many candidates as available seats) win the seats in parliament.

There are several variations of this electoral system, such as the system of cumulative voting, the system of limited voting and the system of block voting.

This system was implemented for the first time at the elections in Japan in 1925.¹⁹ Today the system of single non-transferable vote and its variations is implemented in Afghanistan, Kuwait, Libya and other countries, including very small island countries like the Philippines, Mauritius, etc.

¹⁹ Karakamiseva, T. *“Elections and Electoral Systems”*. Skopje, 2004, p. 79

2. THE POSSIBILITY FOR CHANGING THE ELECTORAL MODEL FOR THE ELECTION OF MPs IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The party list proportional representation electoral system is used for the election of the MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia starting from the parliamentary elections in 2002 until today. In line with the electoral legislation,²⁰ 120 MPs are elected using the D'Hondt electoral formula for the calculation of the results, and the country is divided into six electoral districts and from each 20 MPs are elected. There is no electoral threshold.

In 2011 out-of-country voting was introduced by adding three electoral districts outside of the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia with one seat allocated to each using the plurality electoral model. In 2016 the three electoral districts abroad were united into one and three MPs are elected from that electoral district using the proportional representation system, and the election of these MPs is conditioned by winning the minimum required number of votes, identical to the number of votes required for an MP to be elected in one of the six electoral districts in the country.

2.1 THE IMPACT OF CHANGES TO THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ELECTORAL MODEL

The most important feature of the party-list proportional representation electoral systems is the stimulation for establishing multi-party systems that often results in establishing coalitions and coalition governments. On one hand this is considered an advantage because the multi-party systems and the establishment of coalition governments lead towards representation of the interests of many different groups in the society within parliament and the government²¹.

On the other hand, it could be considered a shortcoming of the electoral system having in mind that most of the parties and the broader coalition governments often cause destabilization on the political scene, as well as establishment of unstable governments that have a problem with effective decision-making.

These are the other features that are considered advantages of this electoral system:

- In theory, no single party, big or small, should be favored by this system, i.e., each party should get the seats that correspond to the support they enjoy in the society.
- having in mind the huge multi member electoral districts, the predominance of local and regional interests over the general and state interests is difficult;

²⁰ Electoral Code ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", Nos. 40/06, 136/08, 148/08, 155/08, 163/08, 44/11, 51/11, 54/11, 142/12, 31/13, 34/13, 14/14, 30/14, 196/15, 35/16, 97/16, 99/16, 136/16, 142/16, 57/17, 67/17, 125/17, 35/18, 99/18, 140/18, 208/18, 27/19, 98/19 and 42/20)

²¹ This is especially important for the so-called divided societies.

- it makes it easier for women and candidates from the minority groups to win seats²²;
- a very small number of votes is lost.

Apart from the possibility of instability of the coalition governments and of the overall political system, the other shortcomings of this system are as follows:

- due to the size of the multi member electoral districts, the direct relation of the electorate with their representatives at parliament is disturbed²³;
- it enables the existence of extremist and radical political parties because their path to parliament is easier than with the majority electoral systems;
- centralization of power is in the political parties since the candidate lists are usually drafted by the party leaderships;
- possibility for unpopular candidates to keep winning seats only because they are on the candidate lists.

One should mention that the advantages and disadvantages of the proportional representation electoral systems with party lists depend significantly on the electoral formula that is applied, the size of the electoral districts, the type of the candidate lists, the electoral threshold and other factors. No combination of these factors can ensure pure proportionality of the results, i.e., each electoral system in a way distorts the proportionality of the election results and there is always somebody with more benefits than the others.²⁴

2.1.1 Simulation of the 2020 parliamentary election results

Research methodology

In order to prove the hypothesis in regard to the party-list proportional representation model, several simulations were carried out with the results from the 2020 parliamentary elections, by keeping the proportional representation electoral model and changing some of its components. Thus, this analysis reviewed the effect on the election results if a certain component of the electoral model is different.

In regard to the electoral districts a simulation was done of parliamentary seats that were won, if the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia is a single electoral district instead of six. For that purpose, the votes of each political party from the six electoral districts on the territory of the country were added up, and we ascertained the total number of all the votes won by the parties in the 2020 elections. Afterwards with the help of the D'Hondt electoral formula 120 seats were allocated as if the entire territory of the country was one single electoral district. This distribution of seats was compared to the original distribution.

In regard to the electoral formula, a simulation of the 2020 results was done by using the three most frequently used electoral formulas for allocating seats depending on the election results: D'Hondt formula, Sainte-Laguë formula and Hare quota. For the simulation the same rules for adding up the results were kept, only at the end instead of using the D'Hondt formula the seats in each of the six electoral districts were allocated by using the Sainte-Laguë formula and the Hare quota. In addition, the

²² Heywood, A. *"Politics"*. Basingstoke, 2007, p. 263

²³ Karakamiseva, T. *"Elections and Electoral Systems"*. Skopje, 2004, p. 90-91

²⁴ Farrell, D. *"Electoral systems: A Comparative Introduction"*. New York, 2001, p. 12

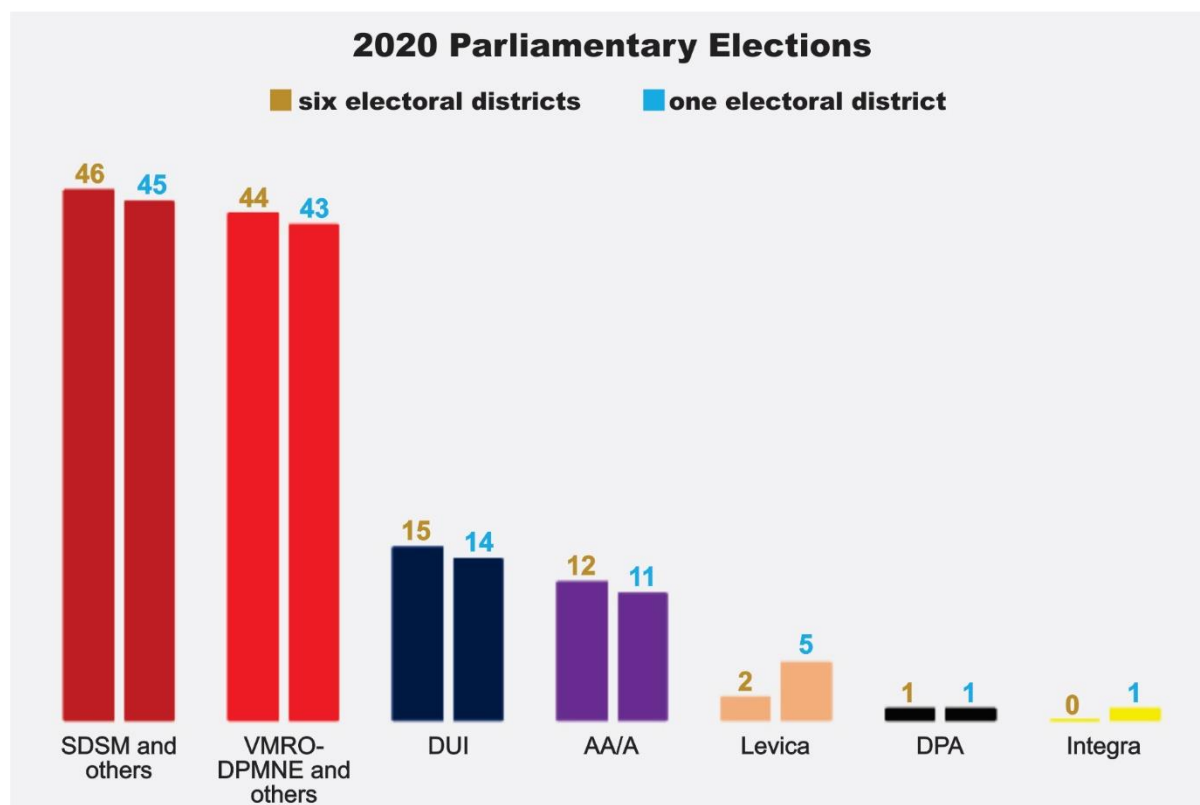
results were simulated by changing the electoral formula and the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia was treated as one electoral district instead of six.

In regard to the electoral threshold the 2020 results were simulated with electoral thresholds of 5% and 3%. In line with the rules, the votes of the parties that did not reach the minimum percent of votes were not taken into consideration during the distribution of the seats. It is very important to emphasize that the electoral threshold could be placed at a national level, or, on rare occasions, at the level of each electoral district separately. The results were simulated by introducing an electoral threshold primarily at a national level, and afterwards at the level of the electoral districts. In addition, the simulation of the results was done by introducing an electoral threshold and the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia was taken as one electoral district instead of the current six.

Within the framework of the analysis differentiation of the political parties to big and small was done. Big political parties or pre-election coalitions were considered those that won five or more seats at the elections, i.e., had an opportunity to form independently a parliamentary group, while as small were considered those that won less than five seats.

Research results and conclusions

The first factor that was taken into consideration during the analysis of the 2020 election results was the change in the number of electoral districts, from the existing six to one electoral district. The final distribution of the seats would differ in four seats, namely four seats that went to one party would go to another if the entire country would be one electoral district instead of six. On the other hand, changing the number of electoral districts would not make any change in regard to the winning party/coalition



(the party/coalition that won the most seats). The two parties with the biggest number of seats would lose one seat each, but the difference between them remains the same. The most striking thing with this change is that it would require a broad coalition government since any parliamentary majority would need incorporating several parties/coalitions. The current majority consisting of MPs that are part of the SDSM, DUI and DPA coalition (total of 61 MPs) would not be sufficient in case of such a change in the electoral elements.

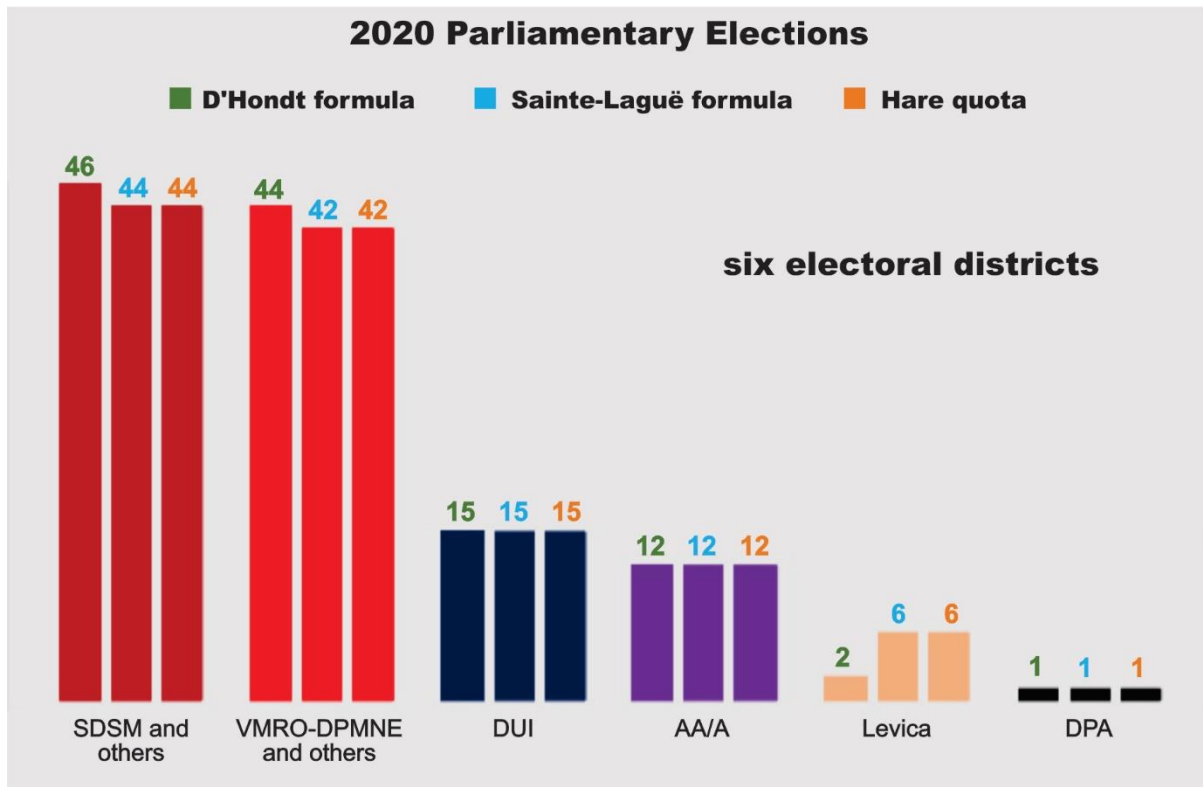
The small parties would benefit the most from this kind of change in the electoral model. If the territory of the entire country would represent one electoral district, the results show that the bigger parties would lose four seats to the smaller ones. The most noticeable difference is with Levica, which instead of the current two would have five seats. In addition, a single electoral district would increase the chances of having more parties winning seats in parliament. There would be seven parties or coalitions instead of the six that would get seats in the 2020 elections. In that case also the party Integra would win one seat. The reason for this is that within one electoral district there is no differentiation between the regionally strong parties and those whose support is equally distributed at a national level.

Easier access to parliamentary seats would significantly encourage the parties that represent the interests of the smaller ethnic communities in the country to run in the elections independently, instead of the current practice of joining one of the two biggest political parties and thus giving up some of their positions for the sake of getting a seat in parliament. Hence, according to the analysis of the SUMNAL – Association for Development of the Roma Community “one electoral district will offer greater chances for the smaller parties and primarily the parties of the smaller ethnic communities that also include the Roma to elect their own representatives, and not to be on the coalition lists of the big parties.”²⁵

The introduction of one electoral district shows best results in regard to the proportionality of the election results in regard to the received votes and reducing the number of “lost” votes. The disproportionality was most evident in regard to the results of the AA/A Coalition and the political party Levica. With six electoral districts the AA/A coalition won six times more seats than Levica (12 versus 2), even though they won a little bit more than twice the votes (81,620 versus 37,426). With one electoral district the ratio of seats would be 11 to 5, which reflects better the ratio of votes. In regard to the two biggest ethnic communities the change from six to one electoral district would mean that the parties that represent the ethnic Albanians would have two MPs less in comparison to parties seen to represent ethnic Macedonians. This is primarily due to lower turnout in the sixth electoral district where traditionally the parties representing ethnic Albanians get most of the seats.

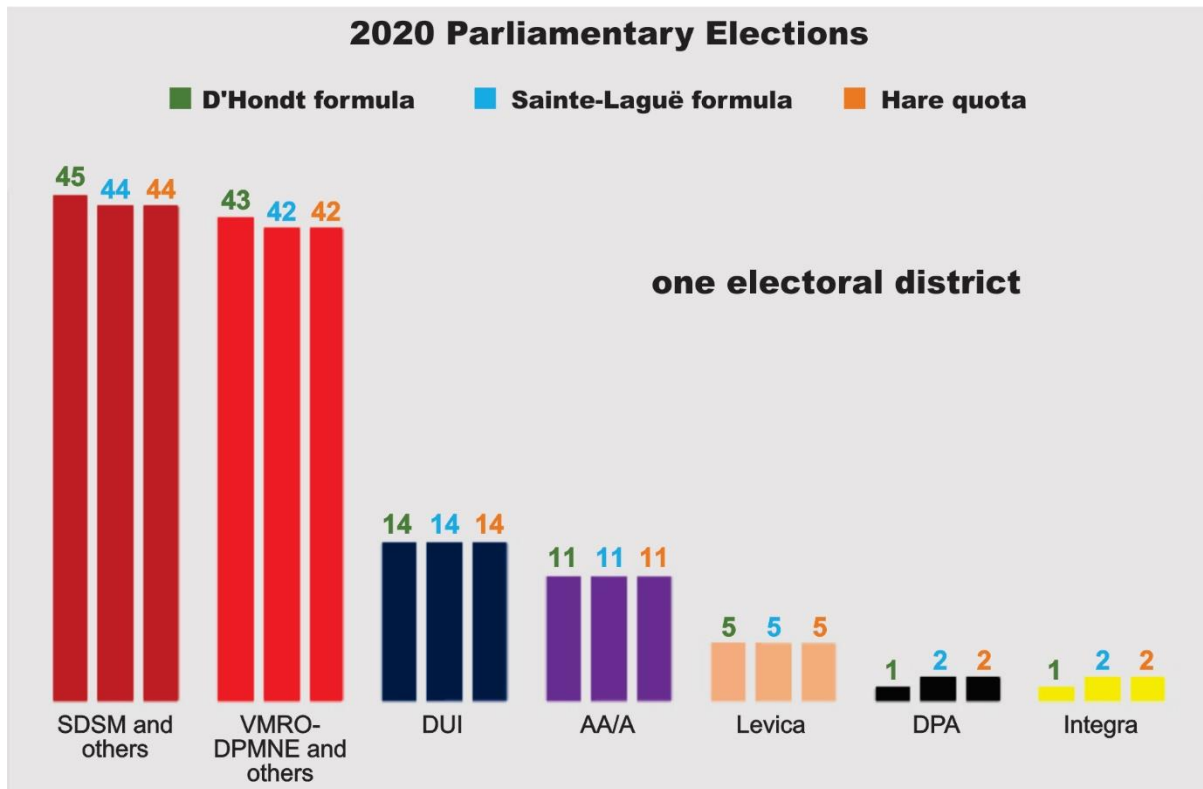
The second factor that was reviewed was the change of the electoral formula, by using the three most frequently used electoral formulas for allocating seats depending on the election results: D’Hondt formula, Sainte-Laguë formula and Hare quota.

²⁵ SUMNAL – Association for Development of the Roma Community. „Анализа на програмите на политичките партии и SUMNAL – Association for Development of the Roma Community. “Analysis of the political parties’ programmes and representation of Roma and Roma issues in the Republic of Macedonia”. Available on: <https://sumnal.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Analiza-na-programite-na-politickite-partii-i-zastapenost-na-romite-i-romskite-prasanja.pdf>, Skopje, 2016, p. 5 (Accessed on 23.3.2021)



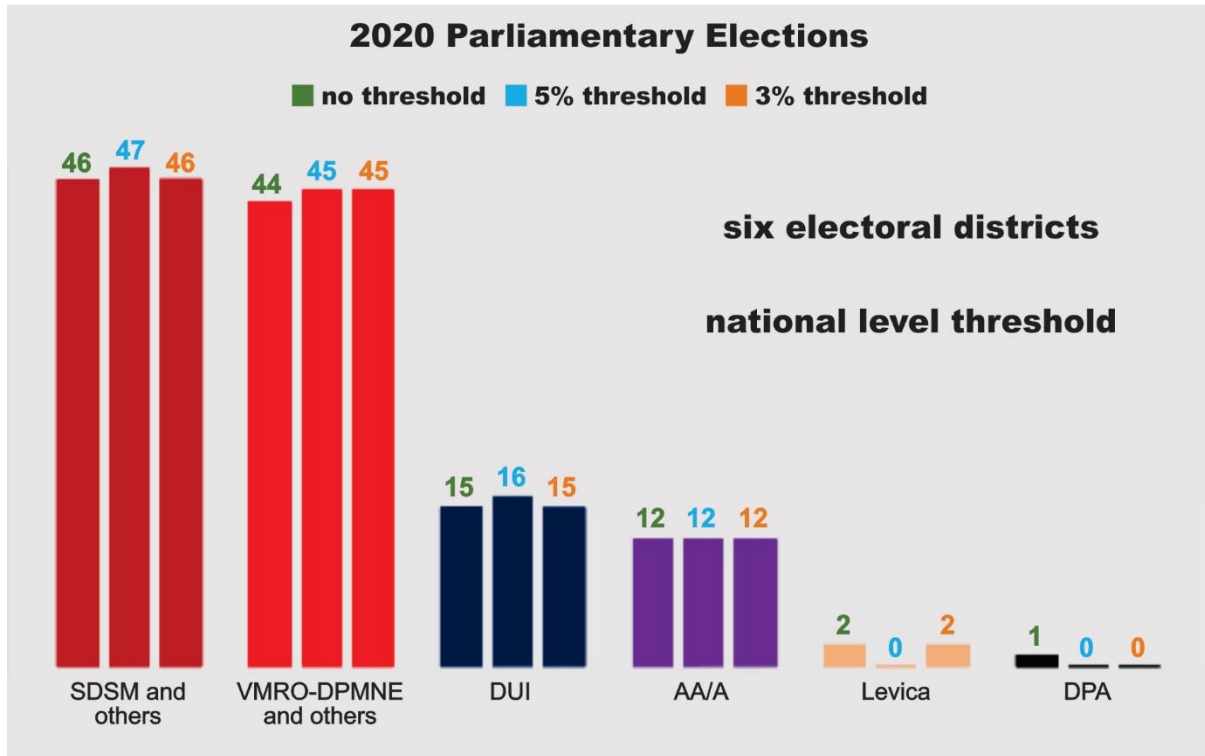
Analyzing the results from the simulation, we can conclude that the use of the Sainte-Laguë formula and Hare quota give identical results in the simulation of the 2020 election results. Still in comparison to the D'Hondt formula used for determining the seats in our country, certain differences could be noticed in regard to the results of the small parties in comparison to the big ones. The change in the electoral formula would get Levica additional four seats at the expense of the two most represented parties that would lose two seats each. This confirms the assumption that the D'Hondt formula favors the big parties i.e., the parties that win the biggest number of votes. The reason for this is that the D'Hondt formula takes into consideration all the highest quotients of the parties (the scores are divided by 1, 2, 3, etc.), while the Sainte-Laguë formula takes every second highest quotient (1, 3, 5, etc.). In this way with the Sainte-Laguë formula the big parties “bid” for seats with a smaller number of high quotients that make it easier for the smaller parties to win a seat. This is the only difference that one can notice in regard to the results if the electoral formula is changed.

These results would have had a similar effect as the change from six to one electoral district and it would result in forming a broad coalition government, since any parliamentary majority would need to incorporate several parties/coalitions. All the other aspects, including the number of parties/coalitions that would win seats in parliament, the party winning the elections and the distribution of seats along ethnic lines would not change significantly.

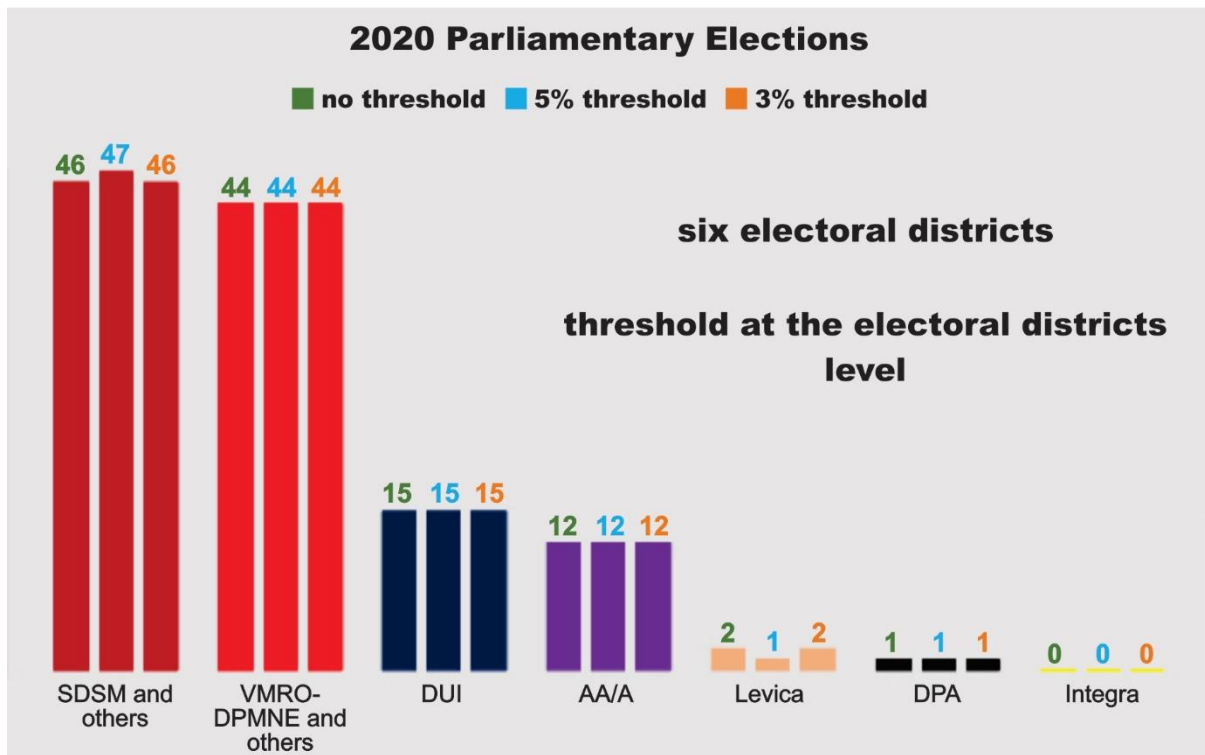


If the two factors are combined, i.e., the size of the electoral district and the electoral formula, the outcome is most favorable for the small parties. DPA and Integra are good examples of that, since under such circumstances they would get two seats. Levica would win additional three seats and they would have a total of five. Furthermore, the number of parties/coalitions that would get into parliament would increase, and the party Integra would also be represented in parliament. In regard to the two parties with the biggest number of seats in parliament, one could see that both of them would lose two seats each, but the difference between them remains the same. The fact that the big political parties would have less seats and there would be more parties/coalitions in parliament also means more scheming in order to have a majority in parliament.

The third factor that was reviewed is the introduction of an electoral threshold i.e., minimum percent of the total votes that a party has to win in order to be able to get a seat. The 2020 election results were simulated with election thresholds of 5% and 3% at a national level and at the level of the electoral districts. The introduction of an electoral threshold of 3% at the level of the electoral districts would not change at all the election results, that is all the parties that are in parliament have reached the 3% threshold at the level of the electoral districts. On the other hand, the electoral threshold of 3% at a national level excludes the party DPA from the distribution of seats and its seat would go to the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE. The 5% electoral threshold at a national level would eliminate DPA as well as Levica from the distribution of the seats. SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI would get their seats, one each.



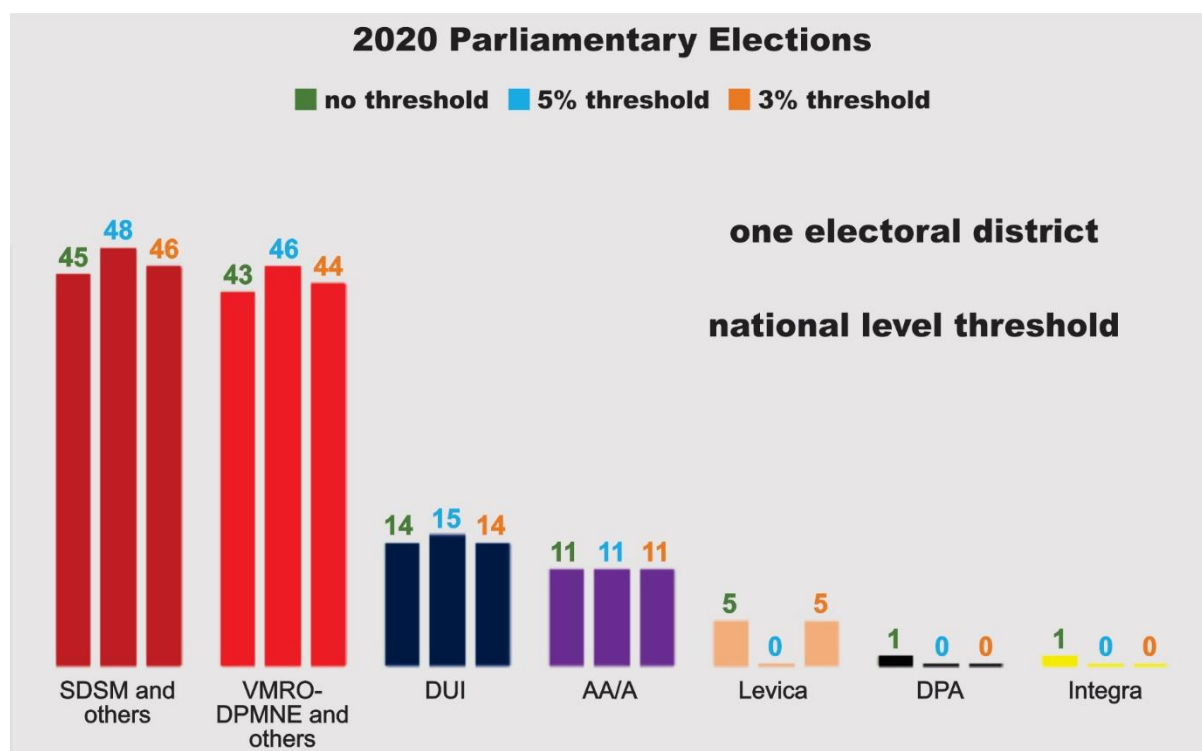
If the 5 % electoral threshold is set at the level of the electoral districts, Levica would lose one of its seats that would go to SDSM. Such is the case in the third electoral district where Levica does not meet the 5% condition, while in the first electoral district it would keep the seat. DPA keeps its seat from the sixth electoral district since they won more than 5% of the votes in that electoral district.



In general, introduction of an electoral threshold, regardless whether it is at a national level or at the electoral district level, significantly reduces the chances of the small parties to get into parliament. In this way a huge number of votes are 'lost', more than 80,000 votes that were cast for the parties that did not get into parliament. On one hand, this would make the process of forming a majority easier, but on the other hand, it opens a possibility for part of the interests of many various groups in the society not to be represented at parliament.

The introduction of an electoral threshold at the level of the electoral districts, and not at a national level is a more favorable variant for those parties whose support is concentrated in one electoral district, like DPA in the sixth electoral district. In regard to the party winning the elections as well as the distribution of seats along ethnic lines, the results have shown that the electoral threshold has no significant impact on that.

If the two factors are combined, i.e., the size of the electoral district and the electoral formula, the outcome is most favorable for the biggest parties. One electoral district and an electoral threshold of 5% fully eliminate the small parties, while the two biggest parties are rewarded with two additional seats. But one should have in mind that the difference between them remains the same.



The introduction of any kind of electoral threshold at a national level, regardless whether it is one or more electoral districts, eliminates the smallest parties and reduces the number of parties/coalitions that would manage to win a seat.

The last factor that was analyzed is the change in the type of electoral lists from closed to open lists. One should point out that there are various types of open lists among which the most popular are the open lists with one preference, where the voters first vote for the party list they favor, and then from the list choose a candidate that they believe should get a seat; an open list with multiple preferences, when the voters first choose the party they believe should win, and then they choose the candidates

they would like to represent them in parliament; and a free list which offers the voters freedom to choose and rank the candidates not only from one list, but from different party lists, to give more than one vote to the same candidate, to disqualify a certain candidate from the list or in certain cases even to create a completely new list of candidates that they prefer. Having in mind the complexity of the other types, it is recommended that if it is decided to change the type of electoral lists, the first step should be introducing open electoral lists with one preference.

A change of the type of the electoral lists will not make changes in the distribution of the seats among the parties/coalitions. The changes should be materialized within the framework of the very parties/coalitions where the open lists would increase the competition among the candidates from the same party, thus stimulating the development of democratic processes in the country. The competition within the framework of the political parties increases the freedom and the diversification of opinions and ideas within the framework of the parties. This could result in a certain decentralization of the power in the political parties, i.e., reducing the power of leaders and senior leadership when making the electoral lists. In this way the chances of unpopular candidates who keep appearing on the candidate lists only because of their obedience and closeness to the leadership to get a seat would be decreased. In addition, with the help of the open lists the voters would also have greater choice, not only when choosing a party, but also candidates thus reinforcing the link between the MPs and the voters.

Still, the use of open party lists has its own shortcomings. The competition, not only among the parties but also among the candidates within the parties will affect the party discipline and may result in internal conflicts and divisions within the party itself²⁶. Those candidates that would get the most votes (preferences) from the electorate, would tend to show greater loyalty to the voters rather than the parties' leaders and leaderships. In this way there would be a certain domination of individual interests over the general and state ones having in mind the closeness of the candidates to their electorate. This tendency, even though positive for the democratic trends in the society, would additionally burden the process of forming a parliamentary majority and making important decisions in parliament. In the Macedonian society, divided along several different lines, the additional competition would result in even more complex processes of negotiating and political bargaining. However, these societies need to find pathways to overcome cleavages and build compromise using democratic tools and mechanisms.

In addition, the open lists that apart from creating problems for the female candidates to get into parliament, they significantly reduce the chances for the candidates who belong to the smaller ethnic communities on the lists of the broader coalitions, like in the case of the coalitions led by SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE. It is also important to point out that the open lists system is more complicated for counting the electoral results and the allocation of seats, and it requires voters to know the candidates on the electoral lists.

²⁶ "Electoral systems. Official website of the Electoral Knowledge Network. Available at <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/es/esd/esd02/esd02e/esd02e03> (пристапено на 9.3.2021)

In regard to changing the components of the proportional representation model one could conclude that if the goal is for each party/coalition to get the portion of seats that corresponds to the support they have in the society and to reduce as much as possible the number of the lost votes, the most favorable combination would be if the territory of the entire country represents one electoral district, with no electoral threshold and by using the Sainte – Laguë formula or the Hare quota for allocation of seats. On the other hand, if the goal is to form stable majority that would have no problems to effectively pass decisions then the most favorable combination is if the territory of the entire country is one electoral district with an electoral threshold of 5% at a national level and use the D'Hondt formula for allocating seats.

Changing the type of electoral lists will not change the final distribution of seats among the parties/coalitions, but this will have an impact on the competition and democratisation within the parties. If the intention is to reduce the centralisation of the political parties, to stimulate the inner party democracy and to strengthen the link between the MPs and the voters, then the open lists are a better option. However, if greater emphasis is placed on the stability of the majority and the effectiveness of the decision-making, then it is recommended to keep the closed lists.

2.2 INTRODUCING MAJORITY MODEL WITH PLURALITY VOTING

The most important feature of the majority electoral system with plurality voting is its favoring of big political parties that in the long run contributes to the establishment of a two-party system. On the one hand, this is considered as an advantage of the electoral system, because thus it contributes to the forming of a stable one-party government that has no problems ensuring the necessary majority for passing decisions, as well as having a coherent parliamentary opposition. On the other hand, it could also be a shortcoming of the system having in mind that it leads towards marginalization of smaller parties and parties representing the ethnic minorities.

The advantages of this electoral system are:

- the simplicity of its use, i.e., the system is easy to understand, and the voting is simple²⁷;
- the relation of the candidates with their voters having in mind that the electoral process is happening in small single-member electoral districts, i.e., the voters know their candidates and have an opportunity to communicate with them frequently, that contributes for the voters to vote often for a certain person and not the party behind that person.
- marginalization of smaller radical groups in society that cannot compete with the big parties and find it difficult to get a seat in parliaments²⁸.

On the other hand, apart from the marginalization of small and minority parties these are the other shortcomings of this system:

²⁷ Karakamiseva, T. *"Elections and Electoral Systems"*. Skopje, 2004, p. 65

²⁸ Heywood, A. *"Politics"*. Basingstoke, 2007, p. 257

- disproportionality in the overall election results in comparison to the votes that are won i.e. a certain party may win with a very small difference in the electoral districts, but to have a huge majority in parliament and vice versa²⁹; the very legitimacy of the government is often called into question having in mind that almost always the party with the majority in parliament did not win the majority of votes in the elections, but the support is about 25-30% of the total number of voters for which reasons some authors believe that these systems produce “minority” governments³⁰;
- the big number of “lost” votes having in mind that the votes given to candidates who do not win a seat have no value;
- the subordinate role of parliament to the stability of a one-party government that makes the crucial decisions;
- the domination of the local and regional interests over the general and state interests having in mind the small single-member electoral districts and the closeness of the candidates to their electorate;
- the creation of the so-called “regional fiefs” that is the electoral system awards the regionally strong parties that do not have strong support at a national level, and it punishes the parties with greater support at a national level, which are not regionally concentrated.³¹

2.2.1 Simulation of the 2020 parliamentary election results

Research methodology

For the purpose of testing the hypothesis related to the majority model with plurality voting, a simulation with the election results from the last parliamentary elections was carried out by using the following methodology: each of the existing six electoral districts was divided into 20 rather balanced single-member electoral districts. The number of voters was taken into account when defining the boundaries of the electoral districts, but also the traditional and geographic connection of polling stations within an electoral district. In this way, the country’s territory was divided into 120 electoral districts, each carrying one MP seat. The number of registered voters, not the number of people who voted in the elections, is considered when defining the electoral districts, in order to factor in the real turnout at each polling station. The party/coalition that would win the required plurality (most votes compared to other candidates) was determined by adding up the votes for each party/coalition in the simulated single-member districts. In this way, all 120 MP seats were allocated by using real election results.

One should also have in mind that the candidates nominated by the party play a significant role in majority systems. Considering it is impossible to know the candidates that would be nominated and in which electoral district, this factor was not taken into account in the simulation. In general, this factor should not produce significant

²⁹ There had been cases when the party with the biggest total number of votes at the elections did not win the biggest number of seats in parliament.

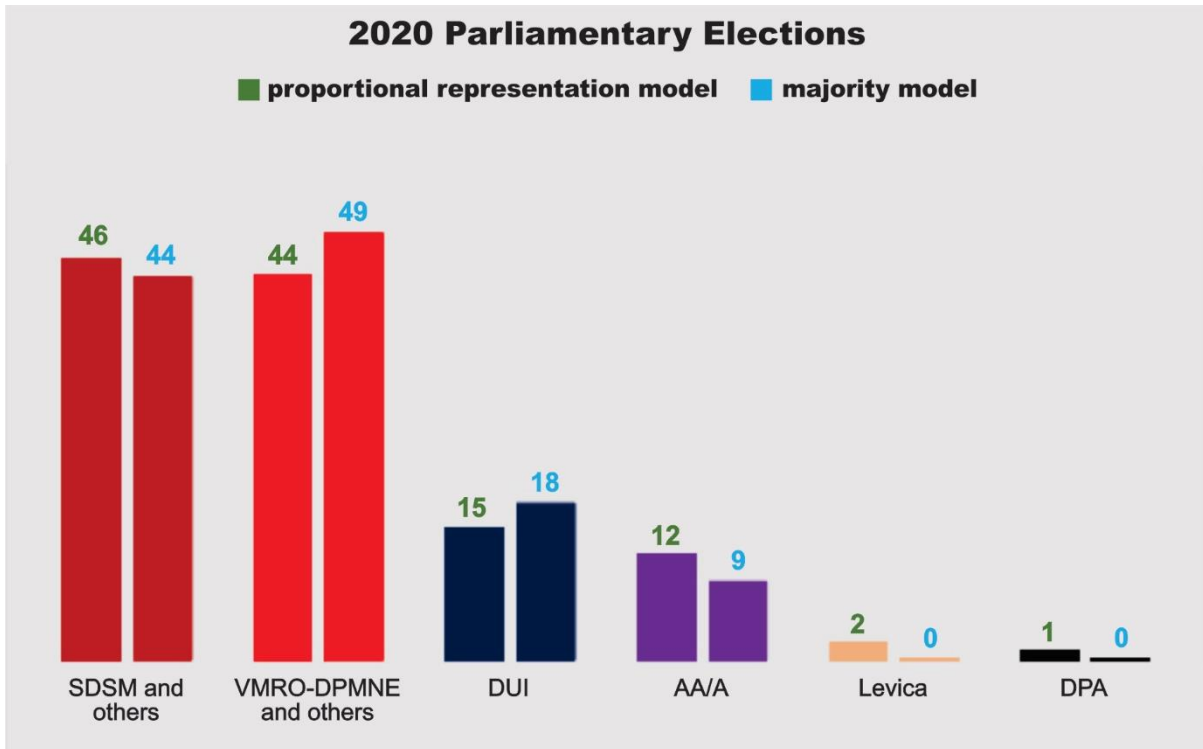
³⁰ Heywood, A. *“Politics”*. Basingstoke, 2007, p. 257

³¹ Karakamiseva, T. *“Elections and Electoral Systems”*. Skopje, 2004, p. 65

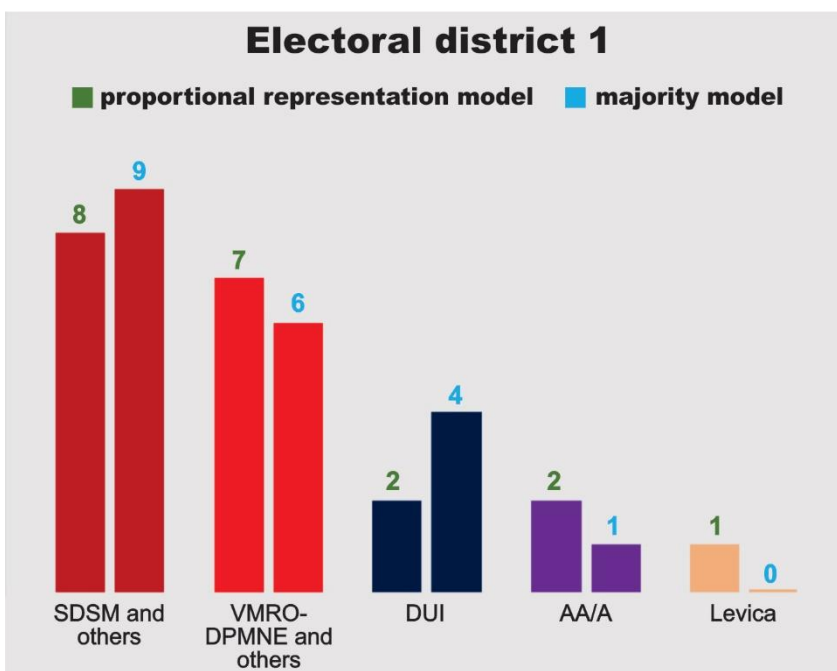
changes in the final distribution, considering the fact that parties reach some sort of balance over the quality (popularity) of all nominated candidates.

Research results and conclusions

By comparing the results of the simulation of the 2020 parliamentary elections in case of a majority model with plurality voting with the results of the elections with party-list proportional representation, they show rather interesting trends.



A change of the electoral model results in a change of the winning party/coalition (party/coalition winning most seats). In the case of the majority model, the VMRO-

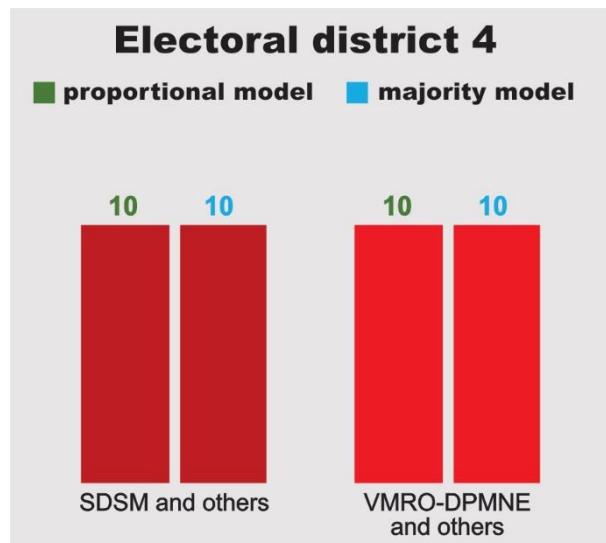
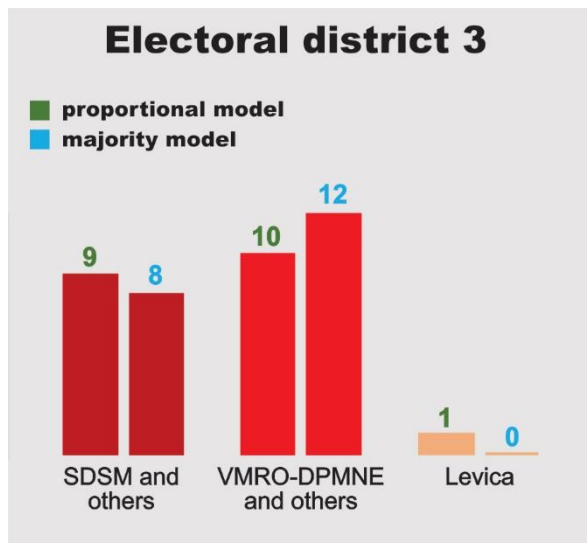
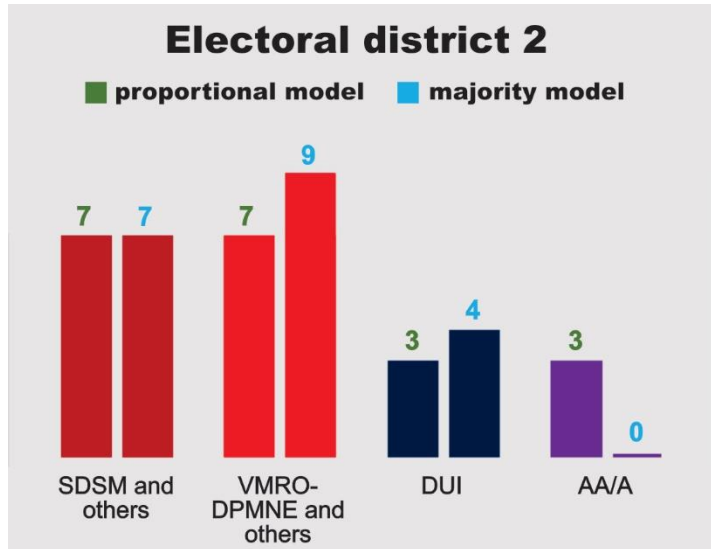


DPMNE-led coalition would win the biggest number of seats in the 2020 elections, and not the SDSM-led coalition. There is disproportionality of the election results versus the received votes, considering that VMRO-DPMNE would win five more seats, despite the fact they received 12,000 less votes. This is due to the fact that the party won by a slight margin in some

electoral districts, but due to the electoral model, the seat is allocated to the candidate winning plurality, be it 1 or 1,000 votes. In addition, this coalition is also favored by the good geographic distribution of its voters, which enables it to have a significantly lower number of lost votes compared to its opponents. This is mostly reflected in the sixth electoral district, where VMRO-DPMNE would win two seats more than SDSM, while getting about 8,500 less votes. The difference is owed to the concentration of votes in several municipalities, unlike the more balanced distribution of SDSM voters in all municipalities.

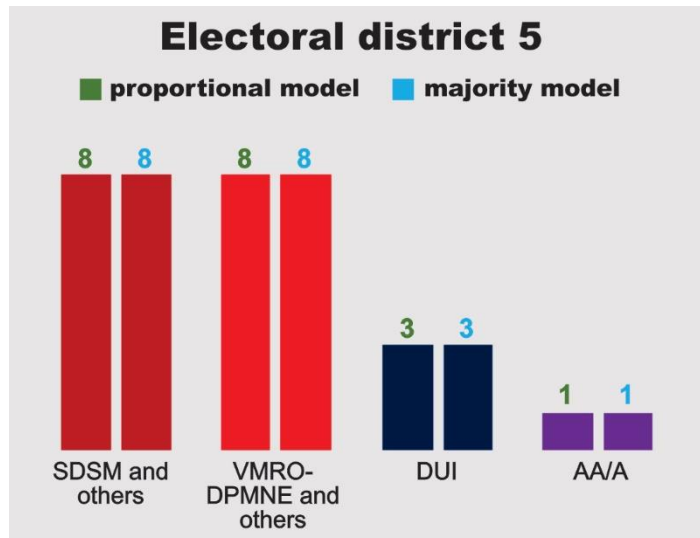
The disproportion of election results versus the received votes is also noticeable when comparing the results of DUI and AA/A coalition. DUI would get twice as many seats as AA/A (18 versus 9) by using the majority model, even though the difference in votes is about 23,000 (104,699 versus 81,620).

One of the main reasons for this disproportion is the high number of “lost” votes, i.e., votes given to candidates who did not win the seat. This is especially seen in those electoral districts where a candidate wins by a slight margin against the opponent. For example, if we take the votes that Levica received, more than 37,000 of their votes would be lost. At a municipal level, there are parties that fail to win a seat despite the fact they had received about 10,000 votes. The higher number of lost votes of SDSM and AA/A compared to VMRO-DPMNE and DUI is reflected in the final distribution of the seats.



The number of political parties/coalitions that would win at least one seat drops from six to four. This electoral model almost fully eliminates small parties and independent candidates, considering that none of the small parties would be even

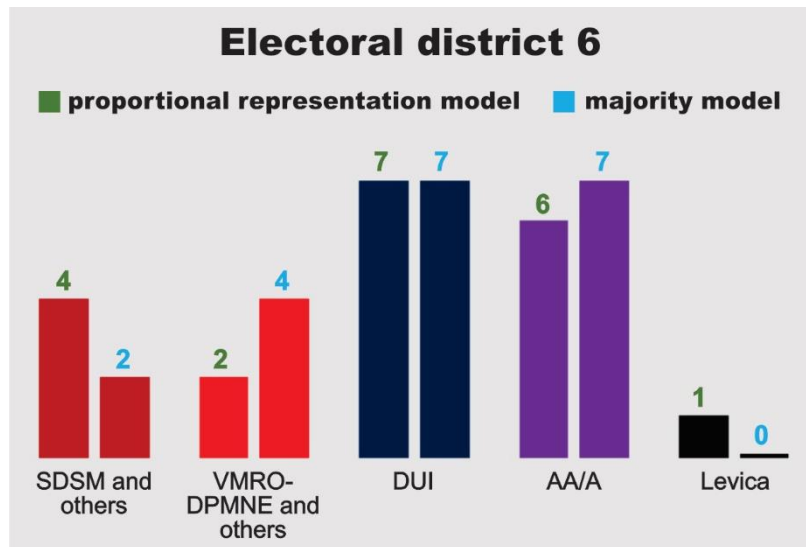
close to winning a seat at the 2020 elections. The only way for a small party to win a seat with this electoral model is if it concentrates its voters in one electoral district, i.e., by creating so-called “regional fiefs”³². With regards to smaller parties, this electoral model rewards the regionally strong parties that do not have big support at a national level, and punishes the parties with stronger support at a national level, but whose support is much less regionally concentrated.



Accordingly, considering the larger concentration of voters in a smaller geographic region (sixth electoral district), DPA has more chances of winning a seat than Levica, despite the fact that Levica won about 24,000 more votes at a national level.

This electoral model would give certain prospects to the parties of smaller ethnic communities to win a seat if their support is concentrated in a single geographic area. The Roma community in Shuto Orizari municipality is such an example. Unlike large multi-member districts, the smaller electoral districts give these parties a bigger chance, considering that the support for geographically-concentrated parties in large electoral districts is lost in the pool of votes.

Regarding the two largest ethnic communities, a change from the proportional representation to the majority system does not have a big impact on the seat distribution, i.e. the number of MPs coming from the parties representing the ethnic Albanians would drop by 1 compared to the number of MPs coming from parties representing the ethnic Macedonians.



Having in mind the evident ethnic character of the country’s politics, it is practically impossible to materialize the most significant trait of the plurality voting electoral system, which is the establishment of a two-party system, leading to the formation of a stable one-party government that holds the required majority to make

³²Ibid p.65

decisions. The simulation results reflect the factual state of having two parallel two-party systems, whose winners enter into coalitions in order to form a government.

2.3. FINAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the 2020 parliamentary elections indicates that the existing electoral model favors the big parties, i.e., it reduces the number of seats won by the smaller parties and hinders the entry of parties in parliament. The findings of the analysis of the election results, by changing a certain component of the current model or by introducing a new majority model, show various tendencies regarding the final distribution of the seats. One cannot say which of the offered alternatives is the most appropriate for our country, i.e. the selection of one model and a combination of its components largely depends on the effects that the legislator would like to achieve with the introduction of a certain electoral model.

The biggest proportionality of election results compared to the received votes and the least “lost” votes is achieved by applying the proportional electoral model, with the entire territory of the country being one electoral district, with no electoral threshold and by introducing the Sainte-Laguë formula or the Hare quota instead of the D’Hondt formula for the seat distribution. The type of lists has no effect on the proportionality of results. The most disadvantageous alternative when reviewing the proportionality and the number of “lost” votes is the introduction of the majority electoral model with plurality voting.

With regards to the representation in parliament, i.e., the number of political parties/coalitions that would manage to win seats, the application of the proportional electoral model, with the entire territory of the country being one electoral district, with no electoral threshold, would result in the biggest number of parties in parliament. Replacing the D’Hondt formula for seat distribution and using the Sainte-Laguë formula or the Hare quota would increase the number of seats won by small parties opposite to big ones. The majority electoral model with plurality voting and the proportional representation model with a 5% electoral threshold are the most disadvantageous options for small parties, considering their complete elimination in the distribution of seats. On the other hand, these two systems could be the most favorable if the objective is to form a stable majority that will have no problems with effective decision-making, having in mind they eliminate the smaller parties and leave a smaller number of players to negotiate the formation of a ruling majority.

Any change of a certain component in the current proportional representation model will not result in changes regarding the winning party/coalition at the elections. Depending on the combination of the elements, the big parties can win or lose a few seats, but the difference between them always remains the same or changes by a single seat at most. The introduction of a majority electoral system with plurality voting would result in tectonic shifts between big parties/coalitions, i.e., a change with regards to the party/coalition that wins most MP seats.

Based on the alternatives considered in this analysis, one could make a conclusion regarding the electoral model that would produce the most favorable results for every political party/coalition that took part in the 2020 parliamentary elections:

SDSM-led coalition – the most favorable option for them is the proportional representation electoral model with one electoral district, 5 % electoral threshold on a national level and application of the D'Hondt formula for allocation of seats;

VMRO-DPMNE-led coalition – the most favorable option for them is the majority electoral model with plurality voting;

DUI – the most favorable option for them is the majority electoral model with plurality voting;

Coalition Alliance for Albanians and Alternativa (AA/A) – the most favorable option for them is the proportional representation electoral model with six electoral districts, no electoral threshold and application of the Sainte-Laguë formula or the Hare quota for seat distribution;

Levica – the most favorable option for them is the proportional representation electoral model with six electoral districts, no electoral threshold and application of the Sainte-Laguë formula or the Hare quota for seat distribution;

DPA – the most favorable option for them is the proportional representation electoral model in one electoral district, no electoral threshold and application of the Sainte-Laguë formula or the Hare quota for seat distribution;

Integra – the most favorable option for them is the proportional representation electoral model in one electoral district, no electoral threshold and application of the Sainte-Laguë formula or the Hare quota for seat distribution;

All other parties/coalitions that took part in the 2020 elections would fail to enter the Parliament, irrespective of the electoral system.

Considering that the application of any electoral model brings more benefits for one option compared to the others, the goal of the electoral legislation is to find a model that would be considered the most balanced, i.e. a system with the biggest benefits for all potential participants in the elections. One possibility of combining the benefits of both the majority and the proportional representation model, while avoiding some of the deficiencies of both systems, is the introduction of **mixed-member proportional representation, dubbed “the German model”**. According to this electoral model, voters cast two ballots during the elections. On the first, voters cast their vote for a candidate in single-member electoral districts. The winner in these districts is decided according to the majority electoral model. On the second ballot, voters cast their vote for a party list, in several multi-member electoral districts, or in some cases the entire country is one electoral district. The results of the second ballots are calculated by applying the party-list proportional representation electoral system, determining the final number of seats for each party/coalition at the end of the electoral process. After the votes are counted, each party gets additional seats depending on the difference between the number of seats won in single-member electoral districts and the number of seats that the party should win according to the proportional voting.

Some experts consider this electoral model to bring “the best of both worlds”³³. One of the main remarks to the current electoral model relates to the centralization of

³³ Hix, S., Johnston, R., McLean, I. “*Choosing an Electoral System*”, London, 2010, p.83

power in political parties, considering that the lists of candidates are most often composed by the leaders and the senior leadership. In this way, unpopular candidates who keep appearing high on the candidate lists because of their obedience and closeness to the leadership, quite often get a seat. Voting for candidates that voters know, in smaller electoral districts within the majority component of the model, strengthens the relationship between the MPs and the voters, whereas MPs feel greater accountability to the electorate, and not only to the party leadership that nominated them.

Voting for candidates in smaller single-member electoral districts within the majority component of the model could be beneficial for the parties representing the smaller ethnic communities which can win a seat independently or within large coalitions, by nominating their candidate in the electoral district that has a dominant population belonging to that ethnic community. Since they are directly elected by the electorate, the MPs would draw part of their legitimacy directly from the citizens, thus having the possibility for more independent actions within the large coalitions.

Still, the proportional representation component within the model significantly reduces the prevalence of local and regional interests over the general and national ones, which is considered a trait of the majority model, considering the small single-member electoral districts and the closeness of the candidates to their voters. Considering that the results of the proportional component prevail at the end, the election winners are the parties receiving the largest support from the electorate at a national level. Therefore, parties are forced to offer programs that incorporate the general and national interests, targeting a large number of different groups in society.

On the other hand, the majority model shows a tendency of producing significant disproportion between the election results and the received votes and a large number of “lost” votes. This deficiency is improved by introducing the proportional representation component within the electoral model. Despite the fact that this model is considered a mixed one, the final election results are proportionate to the voting in the proportional representation component of the model, which means that this electoral model shows favorable results regarding the proportionality of election results against the received votes and the number of “lost” votes. If the proportional component is applied in one electoral district without an electoral threshold, it would produce results that might be considered as closest to what we call “perfectly proportional election results”³⁴.

One of the main remarks to the majority model is that it almost entirely eliminates smaller parties and independent candidates, and their election in Parliament is practically impossible. On the other hand, due to the proportionality of the final results when using the “German model”, each party/coalition would get the percentage of seats that is proportional to the percentage of votes that the party/coalition wins in the elections. In this way, the possibility for a larger number of parties/coalitions to be elected in parliament, as well as more seats won by smaller parties, is made easier. This ensures greater representation of diverse interests in society within parliament.

Considering the explicit ethnic character of politics in our society, the formation of a stable one-party government that has the required decision-making majority could be considered a mission impossible. This eliminates one of the main strengths of the

³⁴ Karakamiseva, T. *“Elections and Electoral Systems”*. Skopje, 2004, p.106.

majority electoral system. Therefore, the need to introduce an electoral model that would differ from the classical majority system arises naturally.

One should also not neglect the flexibility that this system offers, namely the possibility of voters sharing their votes at elections, thus supporting several options. This is possible because of the two ballots, where one voter could vote for one option in the single-member electoral districts, i.e., a candidate they like, while choosing another option on the party list, i.e., the party they prefer.

The system's complexity is often cited as one of its biggest weaknesses³⁵. Still, it should be mentioned that the complexity is largely manifested in the process of vote counting and distribution of seats rather than the very act of voting. Having in mind that the electorate in our country is already experienced with voting on two ballots in the local elections (there are even four ballots when voting on the territory of the City of Skopje), it seems that the very act of voting should not be problematic for the electorate.

³⁵ Ibid, p.108

3. POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING THE MODEL FOR ELECTION OF MAYORS AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

The proportional representation electoral model with party lists is applied for election of municipal council members, using the D'Hondt model for seat distribution, without an electoral threshold and with closed electoral lists. Each municipality is an electoral district.

The two-round majority electoral model is used for the election of mayors in the local elections in the Republic of North Macedonia. A candidate is elected in the first round of the elections for a mayor if they receive the majority of votes cast by the voters. An additional requirement for first-round election of a mayor in a given municipality is that at least one-third of the total number of voters vote. Otherwise, the entire voting procedure in the municipality is repeated. If the requirement is met, but none of the candidates receive the required majority of votes in the first round, then the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round advance to the second round that takes place 14 days after the first round. The candidate receiving more votes is elected in the runoff of the mayoral election. There is no requirement regarding the turnout for the second round.

3.1. CHANGING THE MODEL FOR ELECTION OF MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

The effect of changing a certain component of the current model for election of council members (electoral threshold, electoral method or type of electoral list) will have the same impact on the distribution of seats as is the case of changing that component of the model for election of MPs. These effects were analyzed in detail in the previous sections of this analysis.

3.2. CHANGING THE MODEL FOR ELECTION OF MAYORS

The most commonly discussed proposal for changing the model for election of mayors is the change regarding the number of electoral rounds, i.e., changing from two to one round of elections. The main argument for this change is the loss of time and money spent for two rounds of elections. In addition, a dramatic turnaround in the turnout of voters between the first and second rounds is seen in many cases, i.e., voters show less interest to vote in the runoff, especially if their candidate is eliminated in the first round.

Another argument supporting the elimination of the second round is the fact that often there are negotiations among parties in the period between two rounds. These negotiations can often turn into political bargaining, with actors forced to give up on a significant portion of their programs in order to reach an agreement. Oftentimes, there are cases of vote trading, when voters of one party in the second-round vote for

another party in a municipality where their candidate did not pass the first round, getting in return the votes of that party in a municipality where their candidate qualified for the second round. In the future, these coalitions may continue in the municipal councils. This type of coalitions, formed out of pure political interest, decrease the governance stability and the effectiveness of the decision-making process.

On the other hand, a single-round majority electoral system shows certain deficiencies. The main idea behind the introduction of a two-round majority electoral model is the intention to correct part of the shortcomings of the electoral model with plurality voting.

It has been proven that a single-round voting leads to greater disproportion in election results compared to received votes, as well as many "lost" votes. Considering the majority required for a win, which means more votes than the other candidates, regardless whether it is 1 or 1,000 votes, it can happen in many cases that a candidate who does not have the majority of votes wins, since they won more votes than the other candidates. This usually happens in cases when several candidates receive a significant number of votes. In such cases, all votes given to the candidates who lose the election can be considered lost. A two-round vote increases proportionality of results, i.e., it consolidates and concentrates the support that the winning candidate would get in the runoff.

A single-round vote significantly reduces the chances for election and the win of a candidate nominated by some of the smaller parties or an independent candidate. The reason for this is the tendency of voters to refrain from voting for these candidates, because they are convinced that these candidates do not have a chance to win, and their votes would fall through. In the case of two rounds, voters have more options, i.e., "voters can vote with their heart for their favorite candidate in the first round and with their head for their least unfavorable candidate in the second round".³⁶

The major dilemma behind the use of one or two electoral rounds relates to the time and money savings, as well as less political bargaining compared to the achievement of greater proportionality of votes and reducing the number of "lost" votes. One possibility to cut down on the deficiencies of the two models is the introduction of an **alternative vote system**. This model, which is part of the majority electoral model, incorporates preferential voting in one electoral round. When voting, voters have the option of an "alternative" vote (an alternative preference). In this way, voters signal the candidates they would vote for in an imaginary second round if their candidate did not qualify. After counting the first preferences and if none of the candidates obtains the required majority, all candidates except for the two with the most votes are eliminated, whereas their votes are redistributed to the candidate who received the "alternative" vote. Upon redistribution of the votes, the winner is the candidate with more votes than their opponent. This system is used in some local elections, such as the London mayoral elections.³⁷

The introduction of this model aims at utilizing the benefits of the majority models in one and two rounds. Considering there is only one round, time and money is saved, and there is no political bargaining between two rounds. On the other hand, the possibility of giving an alternative vote (second preference) significantly lowers the

³⁶ Heywood, A. "Politics". Basingstoke, 2007; p.258

³⁷ Hix, S., Johnston, R., McLean, I. "Choosing an Electoral System", London, 2010, p. 55

number of “lost” votes and increases the support given to the winning candidate. The main remark regarding this system is that it can be more complicated for the voters, leading to a higher number of invalid ballots, and certain votes will still fall through if the two preferences are given to candidates who did not qualify for the second round of redistribution of votes.

4. THE IMPACT OF CHANGING THE ELECTORAL MODEL ON GENDER REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT

Gender quotas for representation of women on the candidate lists were introduced in the country's electoral legislation in 2006. Initially, this quota stood at 30 percent of candidates on all lists. The 2015 amendments to the electoral code ensured an even greater representation of women on the candidate lists for MPs, i.e. at least 40 percent of women on every list, with at least one in every three positions reserved for the less represented gender (women), and additionally at least one in every ten positions. The same relates to the candidate lists for council members of the municipalities and the City of Skopje.

Failure to comply would result in the State Election Commission not accepting the candidate list. This intervention resulted in increased representation of women in parliament. Moreover, introduction of gender quotas on candidate lists for council members has produced favorable changes with regard to local representation of women. According to the results of the 2017 local elections, one can conclude that satisfactory gender representation has been secured in municipal councils.

A complete change of the electoral model or a change of some components of the existing one would, undoubtedly, lead to changes in the gender representation in parliament. In order to determine the effect of the possible changes, this analysis assessed the impact that changes to the electoral model would have on gender representation, i.e., reducing the number of electoral districts and the type of electoral lists, as well as the change from a proportional representation into a majority model. Introducing an electoral threshold or changes in the electoral formula within the existing model would not affect gender representation.

4.1. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT THROUGH ONE ELECTORAL DISTRICT

A calculation of the number of women that would win MP seats in one electoral district was made for the purpose of establishing the impact of the change in the number of electoral districts on gender representation in parliament. In doing this, the calculation used the results of the simulation of obtained MP seats, thus considering the country's territory as one electoral district instead of the existing six. It should be considered that the order of men and women on the candidate lists differs among electoral districts, and accordingly the results of the simulation depend on the order of men and women on different candidate lists.

Having in mind it is practically impossible to determine the order of candidates on the electoral lists if the country is one electoral district, the candidate list from the electoral district where the party won most votes (or in other words, where it is

considered that the party enjoys highest popularity) was taken as a sample for each political party.³⁸

The simulation with the 2020 results shows that the number of women candidates winning a seat in parliament would increase by eight if the entire country is one electoral district instead of the existing six. By leaving the quotas in place, the number increases from 43 to 51 seats.³⁹ The difference is most obvious among small and mid-size parties (which win between 3 and 15 seats), considering that in a case of more electoral districts, the obtained MP seats come from different electoral districts and in each electoral district the first or the first two candidates on the lists which are most likely to be elected, by rule, are occupied by male candidates.

SIX ELECTORAL DISTRICTS



ONE ELECTORAL DISTRICT



Simulation of the 2020 parliamentary elections results

According to the simulation of the 2016 results, the number of women candidates winning a seat in parliament would increase by five if the entire country is one electoral district instead of the existing six, i.e., the number increases from 38 to 43 female MPs. The difference, just like in 2020, is most evident in the small and mid-size parties (winning between 3 and 15 seats).

SIX ELECTORAL DISTRICTS



ONE ELECTORAL DISTRICT



Simulation of the 2016 parliamentary elections results

³⁸ For two parties (VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM), whose number of seats exceeds the number of candidates on one list, three electoral districts where the parties won the most votes were considered.

³⁹ It should be mentioned that the number of women MPs at the time of the completion of the elections is taken into account. Changes that take place afterwards, with the Government formation and the entry of additional candidates from the list, result in a rising tendency of women's representation in parliament.

The results from the simulation with the 2020 and 2016 parliamentary election results show that the number of women candidates winning a seat in the Parliament would increase if the entire country is one electoral district instead of the existing six, i.e. the use of one electoral district would have a positive impact on the representation of women in the Parliament.

4.2. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT THROUGH OPEN ELECTORAL LISTS

With regards to the impact of the change in the electoral lists, namely the use of open lists, on gender representation in parliament, there is no way to make a simulation of election results, considering it is practically impossible to anticipate the preferred candidates by voters in case of open lists. Nevertheless, an analysis of candidate lists shows certain trends regarding the representation of women on the lists, with the possibility of drawing several conclusions on the impact of open lists on gender representation in parliament. In this regard, all candidate lists in the 2020 and 2016 elections were analyzed from several aspects: 1) total number of male candidates versus female candidates; 2) total number of male candidates topping the lists versus female candidates topping the lists; and 3) total number of “candidate trios” that include more men versus “candidate trios” that include more women.⁴⁰

Regarding the number of male candidates compared to female candidates at the 2020 parliamentary elections, women comprised 42.7% of candidates, which represents a minimum increase compared to the 2016 elections, when women were represented by 41% on the candidate lists. Out of 1,560 candidates on electoral lists at the 2020 elections, 893 candidates were men, and 667 candidates were women (ratio 1.34:1, meaning there were more than 1.3 male candidates to one female candidate). Unlike 2016, when there was only one list with more female candidates than male, in 2020 there were three such lists. In addition, the same number of female and male candidates was found in nine out of the total 78 lists. Still, despite these improvements, there are more male than female candidates in most of the lists. There is also an improvement in the aspect of the final two places on the list, namely those candidates whose presence is symbolic and their election to parliament is practically impossible. Women continue to prevail, with 82 to 74 men, but the difference is not that big as it was in 2016 (71 women to 37 men).

Regarding the “candidate trios”, 353 out of 468 include two male candidates and only one female, while in 115 there are two female candidates and one male. The ratio is 3:1, which although representing a significant drop from the 2016 ratio (5.84:1), still demonstrates a tendency of including women on the lists only for the purpose of meeting the legal minimum.

⁴⁰ Considering the legislative criteria that at least one place in three belongs to the less represented gender, the “candidate three” includes all three consecutive candidates in a list who should meet this criterion (ordinal number 1 to 3 on the list, ordinal number 4 to 6, ordinal number 7 to 9 etc.). Having in mind that every candidate list is composed of 20 candidates, the first 18 candidates on the list were taken into account for the purposes of the calculation of the “candidate threes”, since the number is divisible by three.

In regard to the number of candidates topping the list, 58 out of 78 were men, and 20 were women. There is also a significant improvement in comparison to 2016 (54 men and 3 women), but the male domination at the top spots of the candidate lists still remains. This is significant because it is considered that the candidates topping the list are the most prominent/most popular members in the parties, i.e. those who are considered to attract the most votes.

With regards to the use of open lists, the findings of the analysis of candidate lists in the 2020 and 2016 elections point to the conclusion that the introduction of open lists would have a negative impact on the gender representation of women in the Parliament. Despite several positive shifts in 2020 in comparison to 2016, the significantly lower number of women on the candidate lists compared to men and the male domination in the so-called “candidate trios” and at top spots on the lists show that the tendencies in our country are still more inclined to meeting the legally prescribed minimum rather than achieving real gender equality in the Parliament. Accordingly, the findings confirm the assumption that open lists would have a negative impact on gender representation in the parliament.

4.3. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT IN CASE OF THE MAJORITY ELECTORAL MODEL

With regards to a change of the electoral system and introduction of a majority model, there is no way to make a simulation of election results, as was the case with the open lists, considering that it is practically impossible to project how many women candidates would be nominated in such a case and in which electoral districts. Nevertheless, several conclusions could be drawn from the cases in our country where the majority electoral model is already applied – the election of the President of the country and the election of mayors. Male candidates have dominated in the six presidential elections so far. Namely, there have been 24 male candidates and only two female candidates running for a President. It should be noted that a woman has not been elected for a President so far.

International reports have highlighted the insufficient gender equality when it comes to the nomination of mayoral candidates, considering that only six women mayors were elected in the 2017 local elections in a total of 80+1 municipalities.⁴¹ Similar or even worse results can be seen in most of the previous local elections. The main remarks in international reports regarding gender representation do not relate so much to the need for a change of the electoral model, but to the visibility of women in the election campaigns as participants and speakers at rallies and debates.

⁴¹OSCE. “*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Municipal elections, 15 October and 29 October 2017: Final Report*”. Skopje, 2017. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/367246> (accessed on 9.3.2021)

Shortcomings have also been noted in the promotion of women's participation in public life and lower representation in campaigns and rallies.⁴²

All of this points to the conclusion that the use of the majority electoral model, where establishing quotas is practically impossible, will have a very negative impact on the gender representation in the Parliament.

The general conclusion is that the use of one electoral district would have a positive impact on the representation of women in the Parliament, i.e. the number of women winning a seat in the Parliament would increase. Regarding the use of open lists, the analysis findings point to the conclusion that introduction of open lists without additional conditions and measures would have a negative impact on representation of women in the Parliament. A change of the electoral system and introduction of a majority electoral model would also have a negative impact. These findings overlap with the conclusions of the Venice Commission. In its opinion, ([https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-PI\(2016\)007-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-PI(2016)007-e)), the Venice Commission says a proportional electoral system with large electoral districts or one electoral district on the entire territory of the country would be a favorable combination for the representation of women in parliaments, along with closed electoral lists and a compulsory quota that not only ensures a large number of women candidates, but also strict rules on the order (for example, a zipper system), as well as effective sanctions if rules are not adhered to. According to the Venice Commission, reserved seats for women in parliament is not considered a sustainable and legitimate option in Europe, and instead of reserved seats, a quota in the electoral lists is preferred.

⁴²OSCE. "North Macedonia, Early Parliamentary Elections, 15 July 2020: ODIHR Special Election Assessment Mission Final Report". Skopje, 2020. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/north-macedonia/465648> (accessed on 9.3.2021)

5. ENHANCING VOTING RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

For the purpose of ensuring inclusiveness in the representation of citizens in the electoral systems, the introduction of quotas is contemplated, i.e., reserved seats in parliaments for various marginal groups in societies.

All citizens have active and passive voting rights – the right to vote and stand as a candidate at elections.

5.1. ACTIVE VOTING RIGHT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

When it comes to the use of the active voting right of persons with disabilities, several measures are seen in countries where the electoral process is facilitated for these citizens, for example:

- Assistance from another person to a voter who is not able to independently take part in the electoral process (physical disability, visual and hearing impairment, etc.), and that could be either a person-companion from home, or in some countries a member of the electoral board assists the person;
- Having persons with disabilities exercising their right to vote at home;
- Special ballots in Braille for persons with visual impairment;
- Removal of physical barriers for access of persons with disabilities to the polling station;
- Alternative ways of voting by mail or electronically.

These measures that facilitate and assist the voting of persons with disabilities are seen in the legislation of almost all countries that we reviewed. These provisions are not incorporated only in the electoral legislations of the Netherlands and Romania. Some of these measures are incorporated in the electoral legislation of our country.

5.2. PASSIVE VOTING RIGHT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

With regards to the exercising the passive voting right of persons with disabilities and the option of introducing reserved seats for persons with disabilities, the following three scenarios are possible:

1) Independent running – if the formal conditions of the Electoral Code are met (usually those are signatures required for nomination), any citizen can submit a nomination regardless of the disability (except in cases of lost legal capacity), based on the constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination;

2) Being included in the lists of parties/coalitions – political parties can nominate citizens on their electoral lists, as their regular members or as a target group of the society they want to represent in their candidate lists (the motivation for this would be different – sensitizing the public, promoting the problems of these citizens, targeting the votes of that group, etc);

3) Quotas for persons with disabilities within the electoral model – the third scenario, which is a theoretical one and cannot be found in practice⁴³ i.e., it was not found in any of the reviewed electoral legislations, is the introduction of a system of compulsory representation, with mandatory seats for persons with disabilities (similar to the system of gender quotas).

INCLUSIVITY OF THE ELECTORAL MODEL

The classic notion of gender equality in the past was related to *equal opportunities* or *competitive equality*. The elimination of the formal barriers such as the right of women to vote was considered to be enough in the past. However, under strong pressure from the feminist movements in the past decades, as it is highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action⁴⁴ dating from 1995, a second concept called “equality of the result” was introduced and it is gaining support. By eliminating the formal barriers like the right of women to vote does not mean that real equal opportunities have been enabled. Among the reasons due to which women are not chosen as candidates and do not have political influence is discrimination, as well as other hidden barriers. The quotas and the other forms of positive measures are a means to achieve the equality of the result. This is based on the acknowledgement that equality as an objective cannot be met through a formal equal treatment.

It has been a quarter of a century since the United Nations Fourth World Women Conference was held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing process, i.e. the Beijing Declaration refers to improving and advancing the position of women in 12 key areas, among which is also the area of *Women in power and decision making*⁴⁵. This area envisages equal access to and complete inclusion of women in the structures of governance and in the decision-making processes. The political quotas are an example of such inclusion. Through reserved seats or women-only candidacies there was a significant increase of the number of women leaders in certain countries. Also, this declaration encouraged undertaking steps to increase the possibility for women to participate in political life, through training on leadership, public speaking and political campaigns, thus preparing women to compete, win elections and become good leaders that will inspire and become politically active.

From today's viewpoint, it can be confirmed that the total percent of women in legislatures throughout the world has reached 24.9% in 2020, which represents an increase of 11.3% in 1995. In four countries (Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia and the United Arab Emirates), women represent 50% or more of representatives in their lower houses or in their only legislatures compared to 1995, when there was not a single legislature that had gender parity. In that regard, gender quotas remain critical factors for women to succeed in being represented better in the legislatures, and young women in particular⁴⁶.

⁴³ Responses from 19 parliaments based on a questionnaire of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation.

⁴⁴ [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (accessed on May 20, 2021)

⁴⁵ [In Focus: Women in Power and Decision-making](#) (accessed on May 20, 2021)

⁴⁶ [25 years after Beijing, IPU analysis shows that gender parity is possible](#) (accessed on May 20, 2021)

Still, the question that is still debated is whether gender quotas are necessary to increase the number of active women in politics. On one hand, there are the proponents of the idea that quotas interfere in the free will of the voters, something that is opposite to the principles of liberal democracy. On the other hand, is the generally accepted position that by introducing gender quotas the process of democratization of society increases as well because with quotas the mandatory political participation of women is secured, which also opens the possibility for increased number of nominations and competitiveness of good candidates in the political parties themselves.

There are different types of quotas, that in combination with different electoral systems can give different results in terms of gender representation.

Types of quotas:

Through various election systems in the world, three types of quotas can be identified:

- 1. Reserved seats**
- 2. Legislative quotas (Constitutional and/or legal)**
- 3. Political party quotas (voluntary quotas)**

By using the principle of reserved seats, a predefined number of women that will be elected is secured, while the other two principles determine a minimal percentage of women on the candidate lists, either according to the legally determined percentage or according to an internal measure determined in the political parties' statutes. There are other types of quotas, but what is important to emphasize as an aspect is the ranking or the order of the candidates in order for the women not to end up at the bottom of the candidate lists as it was often the case in the past. The sanctioning of failure to meet the legislative quotas is also important for successful application of quotas.

Most often quotas provide or aim to elect 30-40% representatives of the less represented gender, which is women most often. This percentage is considered to represent a critical minority, that is a minority that can be loud enough and active to induce changes, but also to incite a positive change in terms of gender representation⁴⁷.

Quotas for the less represented gender entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee, or a government. The quota system places the burden of recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment and selection process. The core idea behind this system is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only symbolically present in political life.

It needs to be mentioned that gender quotas are being introduced using reserved seat systems, and increasingly women elected on reserved seats quota systems are not appointed, but elected like in Jordan, Uganda and Rwanda. This solution for reserved seats for one or only few women is considered to be a pale representation of the category "woman" and is considered not suitable for this modern time. Today,

⁴⁷ [Gender Quotas](#) (accessed on May 19, 2021)

quota systems aim at ensuring that women constitute a large minority of 20, 30 or 40%, or even to ensure true gender balance of 50-50. In some countries quotas are applied as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed, but most countries with quotas have not limited their use of quotas in time.

Most quotas aim at increasing women's representation, because the problem to be addressed usually is the under-representation of women - this is particularly relevant since women usually constitute 50% of the population in any given country. An electoral gender quota regulation may, for example, require that at least 40% of the candidates on the electoral lists are women. A minimum requirement for women implies a maximum set for the representation of men. Since women are the underrepresented group in political institutions everywhere, most regulations aim at securing women a minimum of seats.

Some quota systems are, however, constructed as gender-neutral, which means that they aim to correct the under-representation of both women and men or at any rate set up a maximum for both sexes. In this case, the requirement may be that neither gender should occupy more than 60% and no less than 40% of the seats. This is the case also with the legislation of North Macedonia where the legislation refers to the less represented gender.

A fifty-fifty quota is in its nature gender neutral, and it also sets a maximum for women's representation, which a minimum requirement for women in fact does not.

The concept of "double quota" is sometimes used about a quota system that not only requires a certain percentage of women on the electoral list, but also prevents the women candidates from being placed on the bottom of the list with little chance to be elected. Argentina and Belgium are examples of countries with legal requirements of double quotas.

This type of amendments to the legislation were adopted in North Macedonia that initially had a quota of 30% for the less represented gender, without regulation on the ordering of candidates. Later on in 2006, amendments to the legislation were adopted thus implementing a change to the ranking of candidates with which the less represented gender needed to be placed at least on each third place on the candidate list. Additionally in 2015, the Electoral Code was amended to provide for the candidate lists to include at least 40% of the less represented gender on each third position on the list and additionally at least one more position on each ten positions⁴⁸.

There is however, some confusion about what constitutes different quota regimes. In the book, *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Dahlerup, makes a distinction between two separate dimensions in the definition of quota systems: the first dimension covers the questions who has mandated the quota system, while the second dimension indicates what part of the selection and nomination process that the quota targets. If the leading party in a country uses a quota this may have a significant impact on the overall rate of female representation.

As for the mandating, legal gender quotas are mandated either by the constitution (like in Burkina Faso, Nepal, the Philippines and Uganda), or by the

⁴⁸ <http://rodovreactor.mk/subject/politics/graphs/izbrani-pratenici-column/#.YKUuOagZPa> (accessed on May 25, 2021)

electoral law (as in many parts of Latin America, as well as, for example, in Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, our country North Macedonia, Slovenia and France).

But quotas may also be decided voluntarily by political parties themselves, voluntary party quotas. In some countries, including Germany, Norway and Sweden, a number of political parties have introduced quotas for their own lists. In many others, though, only one or two parties have opted to use quotas.

In other countries, only one or two parties have decided to use quotas. That was also the case with North Macedonia at the last parliamentary elections in 2020, when the Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) had an internal party quota for gender parity, 50-50% representation of both genders on their lists. However, if the leading party in a country uses a quota, such as the ANC in South Africa, this may have a significant impact on the overall rate of female representation. Yet, even if gender quotas are increasingly popular, most of the world's political parties do not employ voluntary gender quotas at all.

Concerning the second dimension, quotas may target the first stage of the selection process, the stage of finding aspirants. Gender quotas at this stage are rules that demand a certain number or percentage of women or either sex be represented in the pool of candidates that are up for discussion. This has been used in countries with plurality-majority electoral systems, like the controversial 'all-women shortlists' used for some elections by the British Labour Party. In general, it is rather complicated to construct a gender quota system that matches a majority system, but it is possible (as for instance in India and Bangladesh at the local level and elections for the new Scottish parliament).

The second stage is the actual nomination of candidates to be placed on the ballot by the party. This frequently used quota system implies that a rule (legal or voluntary) is installed according to which for instance 20, 30, 40 or even 50% of the candidates must be women. This may as mentioned above be formulated in a gender-neutral way, stating that no sex should have not less than for instance 40% and no more than 60.

Gender quotas may be introduced at any level of the political system: federal, national, regional or local. Examples of strong quota regimes at the local level are the 50% quotas at the local level in France and the 20-33% gender quota for the local councils in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In India, this gender quota system is combined with the older system of quotas for the scheduled castes.

Best-fit combinations

Throughout the world it can be noticed that certain quotas are more common in certain parts of the world, while others are more common in the rest of the world. It is easier to introduce quotas in proportional systems, however there are cases of quotas being introduced in some majority systems as well.

Regarding which electoral model functions the best, the answer can be found within the practice, but still one needs to consider that each country has its own specific conditions of functioning, so making comparisons between different systems in different countries would be difficult to do. However, there is empirical data that is available and comparisons that have been drawn from a scientific aspect.

According to IDEA's study *Designing for Equality*⁴⁹, **the best women representation is achieved through the proportional electoral systems, especially proportional systems with large districts**. However, the mere use of proportional list systems without any quota provision does not guarantee a high representation of women.

The magnitude of the electoral district has a direct impact on the likelihood of women being nominated and elected. If parties can nominate more than one person they will be more likely to nominate a balanced list than if they are only able to nominate one person per district. If only one candidate is to be nominated, it will most likely be a male candidate, as he is seen as the most broadly accepted candidate. This will be less of a problem when the district magnitude is higher and several individuals can be nominated and elected from one party, thus increasing the likelihood of parties nominating women to attractive positions.

Related to the district magnitude is the party magnitude. Since the first slots on the candidate lists or in the party hierarchy are often men (party leaders and others), the bigger the party magnitude, the better the chances for women, as parties will then fill their second and subsequent seats with candidates other than their absolute top candidates. The number of elected parties can be limited, for example, by a legal threshold of support needed to gain representation in parliament (e.g. 5 percent of the vote). This excludes the smallest parties from the legislature.

The ballot structure defines how voters are allowed to express their choice. Electoral systems can be either candidate-centered (e.g. FPTP systems) or party-centered (e.g. closed List PR systems). It is easier to apply quotas in electoral systems that are party-centered, as the candidates elected from each party will then be determined by the parties at the time of nomination rather than by the voters on election day.

Below are several combinations of electoral models and ballot structure used to achieve women representation.

- *Systems with a second tier + reserved seats—a tier for women candidates only*

All systems can turn an existing tier into a women-only tier or alternatively add a tier for women candidates only. This is guaranteed to elect as many women as the quota makes provisions for. Example of this combination: Pakistan.

- *List PR with small districts + nominations—percentage regulations with placement mandate/rank-order rules (e.g. zipper quotas)*

This combination is guaranteed to work when lists are closed. If lists are open, the order can change, thus undermining the predetermined ranking. It is likely to be slightly less effective in List PR systems with small districts than in List PR systems with large districts as party magnitude is likely to be smaller and more men (who are usually top ranked) are likely to be elected even under zipper quotas. This can be dealt with within parties by alternating also the number-one position on lists, placing women first on some lists and men first on others. Examples of this combination: Dominican Republic and Ecuador.

⁴⁹ [Designing for Equality](#) (accessed on May 19, 2021)

- *List PR with large districts + nominations—percentage regulations without placement mandate/ rank-order rules*

This combination significantly increases the likelihood of women being elected, especially with large party magnitudes, as even women who are placed quite low on the lists are elected.

- *List PR with large districts + nominations—percentage regulations with placement mandate/ rank-order rules (e.g. zipper quotas)*

This combination is guaranteed to work when lists are closed. If lists are open, the order can change, thus undermining the predetermined ranking. It is likely to be slightly less effective in List PR systems with small districts than in List PR systems with large districts as party magnitude is likely to be smaller and more men (who are usually top ranked) are likely to be elected even under zipper quotas. Examples of this combination: Argentina, Belgium, Costa Rica and Iraq (2005 elections), as well as our country North Macedonia.

- *Block Vote + reserved seats—best loser system*

This is possible and it will work unless there are not enough women candidates. It gives parties incentives to field women candidates in order not to lose any seats to competing parties. Example of this combination: Jordan.

- *Party Block Vote + nominations—percentage regulations without placement mandate/ rank-order rules*

This combination is guaranteed to work since the whole list is elected if it receives the highest number of votes. Independent candidates who could reduce the effect of the quota are not likely to stand to any great extent as their chances of winning are minimal. Examples of this combination: Cameroon (voluntary party quotas adopted by the two largest parties) and Djibouti.

- *Party Block Vote + nominations—percentage regulations with placement mandate/ rank-order rules (e.g. zipper quotas)*

This combination is guaranteed to work just as well as without placement mandate/rank-order rules as the whole list is elected if it receives the highest number of votes.

- *Single Transferable Vote + reserved seats —best loser system*

This combination is possible by the same logic as Block Vote, LV and SNTV. When all but the reserved seats have been filled in each district, if no woman has been elected, the highest-polling women are elected.

- *Mixed Member Proportional + reserved seats—a tier for women candidates only*

This combination is guaranteed to elect as many women as the quota makes provisions for.

- *Borda Count + reserved seats—best loser system*

This combination is possible by the same logic as block vote, limited vote, single non-transferable vote and single transferable vote, but only in multi-member districts.

Least favorable combinations

Most of the single-member district systems provide obstacles for women candidates so it can be concluded they are the least favorable model for women representation. The electoral systems that make the implementation of quotas more difficult are those that use small electoral districts with candidate-centered voting and decentralized nomination procedures and those which result in low party magnitudes, for example, FPTP, two-round systems and alternative voting. Many candidate-centered systems, however, do not allow predetermined ranking, as it is the voters who determine the ranking of the candidates on election day. Even proportional systems such as single transferable vote can be difficult to combine with certain quotas as they too are candidate-centered.

Inclusion of other marginalized groups

In certain countries quotas are applied also in the election of minorities on the basis of regional, ethnic, linguistic and religious divisions.

There are also many ways to enhance the representation of minorities and other communities. Again, electoral systems which use reasonably large district magnitudes encourage parties to nominate candidates from minorities on the basis that balanced tickets will increase their electoral chances. A very low threshold, or the complete elimination of a formal threshold, in PR systems can also facilitate the representation of hitherto under-represented or unrepresented groups. In plurality/ majority systems in particular, seats are sometimes set aside in the legislature for minorities and communities.

Reserved seats can be used to ensure the representation of specific minority groups in the legislature. Seats are reserved for identifiable ethnic or religious minorities in countries as diverse as Colombia, Croatia, India, Jordan, Niger, New Zealand, Pakistan, Slovenia and Taiwan.

Representatives from these reserved seats are usually elected in much the same manner as other representatives, but are sometimes elected only by members of the particular minority community designated in the electoral law. This requires a separate communal roll. While it is often deemed to be a normative good to represent small communities of interest, it has been argued that it is a better strategy to design structures which give rise to a representative legislature without overt manipulation of the electoral law or legal obligation, and that quota seats may breed resentment on the part of majority populations and shore up mistrust between various cultural groups⁵⁰.

Youth representation

The youth representation in the legislatures depends on what type of electoral system will be used among other things, i.e. whether the electoral model foresees certain measures that bolster nominating young candidates. As it was mentioned previously, the systems that use proportional lists encourage the political parties to balance their lists with representatives with different backgrounds. On the other hand,

⁵⁰ [Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook](#) (accessed on May 21, 2021)

the countries with majority systems pay special attention to individual candidates that often come from the political elite and are usually middle-aged men.

Other countries such as Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Uganda have adopted a certain type of quota to encourage youth representation. Also, like in the case with women representation, youth quotas have different forms, but generally fall under the following categories:

- guaranteed seats (constitutional and/or legislative)
- legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative)
- voluntary party quotas

A few countries have reserved seats to promote inclusion in legislative bodies. Illustrative examples for countries with reserved seats for young people include:

- Kenya, with 12 members nominated by political parties to represent special interest groups (youth, persons with disabilities, and workers) with the relevant list to be composed of alternating male and female candidates
- Uganda, with five seats for people under 30, one of whom must be a woman
- Rwanda, with two members of parliament elected by the National Youth Council. Besides these two members of parliament, there is one seat reserved for the disabled community⁵¹.

Money plays an important role in electoral processes in all countries. Money only becomes problematic when costs for nomination fees and campaigning are high which limits the access to campaign financing by marginalized groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, is disproportionately difficult due to cultural and social barriers, when there are no legal frameworks or mechanisms in place to control donations and expenditures of political parties and candidates, thus creating an uneven playing field and electoral process.

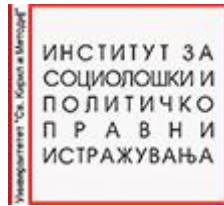
Earmarking state subsidies for specific activities and/or target groups is not new and has been used in several countries to promote the representation of underrepresented groups in political institutions. A small number of countries, including Ireland and Kenya, have drafted legislation requiring parties to use part of their funding to increase youth political representation.

In Kenya, according to law, at least 30 percent of direct public funding provided should be used for promoting the representation in Parliament and in the county assemblies of women, persons with disabilities, youth, ethnic and other minorities and marginalized communities⁵².

In Ireland, it is foreseen that the funding received is also deemed to include provision in respect of expenditure by qualified parties in relation to the promotion of participation by women and young persons in political activity.

⁵¹ [Quotas for Youth](#) (accessed on May 21, 2021)

⁵² National Council for Law Reporting, "Laws of Kenya: The Political Parties Act, 2011," <http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/PoliticalPartiesAct.pdf>. (accessed on May 25, 2021)



Views of citizens and political parties on the change of election rules

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Introduction

The research related to the views of the citizens and political parties on the change of election rules was conducted at the request of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) as part of their Electoral Integrity Program. The National Democratic Institute participated in the development of the methodology and monitored the implementation of the research.

The research comprises two sections, in order to be able to compare data on the most important questions. The first section, titled "Views of political parties on the change of election rules", consists of analysis of the parties' responses to several topics. A questionnaire was submitted via email to 18 political parties according to the following criteria: parties that independently took part in the elections and won parliamentary seats, small parties that have existed for a long period of time and are active in public, parties that raise the issue of change of the election model (or submitted a proposal for its change) and parties of smaller ethnic communities. The questionnaire aimed to cover parties' reflections and views on several questions related to reforms of the election model that are mentioned in public, such as: number of electoral districts, election formula, electoral threshold, open lists, guaranteed parliamentary seats for smaller ethnic communities, as well as local elections for mayors in one round.

In the second section of the research, the focus is on the views of the citizens on electoral changes, as well as on other elements that are important for political representation. The analysis is based on 6 focus groups conducted with citizens from all electoral districts who are not politically active. During the selection of the respondents, adequate representation was ensured in terms of: gender, level of education, area of residence and ethnicity. Topics covered in this section include: interest in politics, voting, representation of citizens, change of the election model (change of the number of electoral districts, open lists, local elections), voting for a small party, representation of youth and women in politics. Focus groups were conducted online via the Zoom platform.

The research was conducted in the period of April and May 2021.

For the purpose of creating the instruments, this research took into account the data from the field survey *Parliament Watch*⁵³ by the Institute for Democracy, as well as the analysis titled *Translation of Votes into Parliamentary Seats – How to Ensure Equal and Fair Allocation* prepared by researchers Zlatko Atanasov and Dejan Dimitrievski.

The analyses of both sections, and conclusions are given below.

⁵³ https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MKDWEB_A4_Terenska_anketa_mart_2021-2.pdf

Views of political parties on the change of election rules

This analysis covers the views of 14 political parties that in the period (from 28 April to 10 May, 2021) responded electronically to the submitted questionnaire. The political parties to which the questionnaire was submitted, were selected based on the following criteria: parties that independently took part in the elections and won parliamentary seats, small parties that have existed for a long period of time and are active in public, parties that raise the issue of change of the election model (or submitted a proposal for its change) and parties of smaller ethnic communities that are below 20%.

Number	Answered the questionnaire	Did not answer the questionnaire
1	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE)	Levica (the Left)
2	Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)	VMRO-People's Party
3	Alliance for Albanians (AfA)	Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia
4	Alternativa	Turkish Progressive Party
5	BESA Movement	
6	Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	
7	Democratic Alliance (DA)	
8	Integra	
9	YOUR Political Party	
10	Party for Social and Economic Progress (POEN)	
11	Union of Roma in Macedonia (URM)	
12	Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia (DPTM)	
13	Democratic Renewal of Macedonia (DOM)	
14	Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)	

The survey is composed of 8 questions with additional 4 sub-questions on topics related to possible electoral changes, such as: number of electoral districts, election formula, electoral threshold, open lists, guaranteed parliamentary seats for smaller

ethnic communities, local elections in one round. The analysis of each question separately is given below.

1. For a long time now, some political parties have raised the issue of changing the number of electoral districts from 6 to 1 ED; such a change would lead to a different allocation of minimum 4 seats, and at the same time would lead to equal value of each vote. What is the view of your political party, how acceptable to you is the change to one electoral district?

Based on the answers to this question, out of a total of 14 political parties, 9 are in favor or support the changes to the election model in terms of changing the number of six electoral districts to only one electoral district. The following parties are in this group: SDSM, LDP, Democratic Alliance, Integra, YOUR party, POEN, DOM, Union of Roma in Macedonia and Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia. They point out the following arguments in favor of this change: equal value of each vote, allocation of seats according to the votes won, which means a realistic reflection of the will of the citizens, equal opportunity for all parties; opening an opportunity for new political ideologies, visions and ideas and increasing competitiveness in this aspect; *“dismantling the one-party system of government”* which would result in *“departization”* of institutions. Regarding this aspect, SDSM states that the reforms should be made by consensus.

The BESA Movement believes that it would be most appropriate if the territory was organized in 3 electoral districts, the most appropriate solution for Alliance for Albanians would be 8 electoral districts, while Alternativa does not have a clear position on this question, i.e. they believe that the election model should *“reflect the reality and equitability of every ethnic and political community”*. For DUI, the option for one electoral district is unacceptable because it reduces the possibility of representing all smaller areas, which would mean passing laws that are not in the interest of all, and such a change would also reduce the possibility of establishing and functioning of a stable Government.

According to the representative of VMRO-DPMNE, one electoral district with an election threshold is acceptable, which would mean equal value of each vote and a stable Parliament. An alternative would therefore be a majoritarian model with 120 electoral districts.

(additional question) With this change, what is the risk in terms of representing the smaller and rural areas in the Parliament?

With regards to this question, DUI emphasizes the risk of non-representing rural and smaller areas in the Parliament if the elections are organized on the territory of the entire country as one electoral district. The representative of VMRO-DPMNE shares the same thoughts and according to him, such a change would give more primacy to candidates coming from places with larger voter base, which could result in the smaller places not getting their representatives.

According to the Democratic Party of Turks, POEN, Democratic Alliance, **this change does not pose a risk** because it can be easily overcome by the political parties. In the same context, neither SDSM sees any risk of such a change, but a

chance for a more direct representation of the will of the citizens. Integra believes that one electoral district gives everyone the opportunity to enter the political market with their ideas, and according to YOUR party this change will open new ways to communicate with the citizens. According to DOM, in the current composition there are practically no MPs from rural areas, but the lists from one electoral district include candidates who live in another electoral district. Alliance for Albanians does not see the representation as a risk, they are more concerned about the capacity of the Parliament and the activity of the MPs from rural and smaller areas.

The BESA Movement does not point out any risks, they only believe that three electoral districts are the most appropriate solution. Alternativa emphasizes that heterogeneity is a value, but does not say whether this value would be disturbed by changing the model.

With regards to this question, although the opinions differ, the prevailing view is that they do not see a risk that cannot be overcome.

2. Election formula also plays a big role in the allocation of seats; simulations show that if the D'Hondt formula is replaced by the Sainte-Laguë or Hare quota, a different allocation of seats will be obtained. If the number of electoral districts remains the same, and the way of calculating the seats changes, 4 seats will be allocated differently, while if there is one electoral district and the election formula changes, 6 seats will be allocated differently (according to the results of the last elections). What is the view of your political party, is it time to replace the D'Hondt formula that favors the large parties?

Based on the answers to this question, it can be seen that in the future it is necessary to have an intensive discussion between the political parties, including the expert public, regarding all issues related to electoral reforms. Although this specific question referred to the need to change the D'Hondt formula, Alliance for Albanians, SDSM and DUI believe that the issue of changing the election formula should also be considered in a discussion about more comprehensive changes.

For POEN, Alternativa, Integra and LDP, the Sainte-Laguë formula or Hare quota is more adequate, while YOUR party believes that a change is needed. Furthermore, for Integra, YOUR Party, POEN and Democratic Party of Turks, favoring the large parties is a deficiency in the political system and an obstacle for further development. DOM and the BESA Movement are ready to discuss this issue. The biggest problem for VMRO-DPMNE is the irregular elections that have a much bigger effect on the allocation of votes than the change of the election formula would have. The Union of Roma in Macedonia and Democratic Alliance believe that democracy is not mature yet for this change or that the D'Hondt formula should not be changed.

With regards to this question, it can be concluded that the views of the surveyed parties are divided, on the one hand almost half of the parties believe that a change towards equal value of each vote should be made and favoring of large parties should stop, and on the other hand are the parties that do not have a clear position yet, believe that these reforms must be considered in the context of major changes and wider public debate, or that it is not yet time for changes.

- 3. If the reforms of the election model are aimed at having only one electoral district (regardless of which formula would be used to calculate the seats), questions arise as to whether it is necessary to introduce an electoral threshold, what percentage it should be, what effects would this change have (in relation to smaller political parties, parties representing specific interests of citizens, parties representing the interests of specific ethnic communities)? What is your party's view on these questions?**

Parties are divided regarding the question whether an electoral threshold is needed in a hypothetical situation of having one national electoral district. Some of the parties are in favor of establishing an electoral threshold (Alternativa, VMRO-DPMNE, DUI, Union of Roma), but there are differences of opinion about the level at which such threshold should be set. Referring to the practice of most European countries, for VMRO-DPMNE an appropriate threshold would be between 6-8%, while for DUI an appropriate threshold is the one that is set at 5% of the number of registered voters in the voters list. The Union of Roma is in favor of introducing a minimum threshold, but at the same time proposes guaranteed seats for smaller communities (those under 20% of the population) if that threshold is not met.

Most of the parties are strongly against the introduction of any threshold in case of one national electoral district, otherwise defined as a natural threshold (Alliance for Albanians, BESA, Liberal Democratic Party, Integra, Democratic Party of Turks, Democratic Alliance, DOM, POEN). For the Alliance for Albanians and BESA, introducing a threshold would be "illogical" in case of one electoral district, if the goal is to achieve higher inclusion of smaller parties in the Parliament. Similarly, Liberal Democratic Party warns that the introduction of a threshold will have the opposite effect than the desired one - inclusion of more of the smaller parties in the work of the Parliament. Democratic Party of Turks, on the other hand, emphasizes that the representation of all ethnic communities is extremely important for the Macedonian democracy and that this could be made possible by the so-called "natural threshold".

For SDSM and YOUR party, the introduction of electoral threshold in case of one electoral district should be the subject of a wide debate, and additionally YOUR party believes that if such a threshold is introduced it should be as low as possible to allow the participation of smaller parties in the Parliament.

- 4. One of the questions that also arises in the public is the change of the election model for the purpose of introducing open lists. Has the possibility of introducing open lists been discussed in your party so far? In what direction is the discussion going? How would such a change affect the number of women in the Parliament? What would you as a party do to maintain the representation of women on your lists?**

Almost all political parties that responded to this survey are in favor of introducing open lists (Alliance for Albanians, Alternativa, BESA, Democratic Party of Turks, DOM, DUI, SDSM, Liberal Democratic Party, Union of Roma, YOUR party, POEN). Arguments in favor of open lists are: better representation (Alternativa, Democratic Party of Turks), democratization of political parties and society as a whole (BESA, DUI, Union of Roma, Alternativa), higher transparency of elected MPs (DUI), strengthening

the relationship between the candidates and the voters (Liberal Democratic Party) and strengthening citizens' participation in the work of the Parliament (POEN). Most political parties expect strong benefits from the introduction of open lists.

Two political parties (VMRO-DPMNE and Democratic Alliance) emphasize the weaknesses of introducing open lists. For VMRO-DPMNE, the open list model is complex to implement: the party emphasizes that the model requires comprehensive education of the voters and that it will create serious administrative difficulties in the work of the State Election Commission (SEC) in the process of vote counting. The same party also expects that the open list model will also create serious difficulties for women's participation in the Parliament. Instead of open lists, VMRO-DPMNE believes that the majoritarian system with 120 electoral districts will ensure stronger relationships between the candidates and the voters. Democratic Alliance, on the other hand, believes that the open list model will lead to a large number of invalid ballots and increasing divisions in the parties, followed by difficulties in organizing campaigns by different party candidates. This party proposes to first test the implementation of the open lists in the election of local councilors, and only later (if the results prove to be good) to implement the open lists for the parliamentary elections. One party (Integra), on the other hand, has a positive view on the introduction of open lists and the benefits that would result from this change, however they emphasize that the implementation of this idea at this moment is technically impossible.

Almost all political parties, believing that the introduction of open lists should happen immediately, do not foresee significant problems regarding the representation of women. YOUR party is an exception to this trend as it recognizes that in a broader context, the participation of women can be reduced if a quota for the women's percentage representation in case of open lists is not introduced. On the other hand, Alliance for Albanians believes that "the electorate is mature enough" to ensure equal representation of men and women, while BESA proposes women candidates to be elected in a special women's competition in order to ensure equality. Democratic Alliance and DOM are in favor of increasing the quota for women's participation to 50%, while POEN is in favor of allocating seats between men and women in the candidate lists on a parity basis where the difference between the number of seats will not be higher than 1. DUI believes that representation can be ensured with a minimum quota of 40% of the underrepresented gender. Liberal Democratic Party, on the other hand, proposes strengthening the women candidates' campaigns to ensure equal gender representation, without introducing additional legal criteria.

5. In many countries, there is a practice of having guaranteed seats for smaller ethnic communities (usually one or two). The way the election model is set in North Macedonia at the moment, parties of the smaller ethnic communities (which are below 20%) must build pre-election coalitions to enter the Parliament. What is your party's view on introducing guaranteed seats for smaller ethnic communities? Should they be introduced and how would this change affect the quality of the political offer and the pre-election negotiations?

- **How would this change affect the ethnic division in the society?**

- **Do you think that currently the smaller ethnic communities are adequately represented in the Parliament?**

Most parties are not in favor of a solution that would introduce guaranteed seats in the Parliament for smaller ethnic communities. Some believe that the new proposal, which provides for the introduction of one electoral district for the whole country, will ensure representation even without guaranteed seats (DOM, Democratic Alliance, SDSM), or that their alternative proposals will reach the same goal (BESA-3 EDs). DOM believes that the Parliament should reflect the multiethnicity of the country, but hopes that in the future the parties will not be dominated by ethnicity, but by ideological affiliation and the concept of civil parties. Democratic Alliance also believes that parties should aim for a civil concept. At the same time, it believes that with the present model, the parties of smaller ethnic communities, except the Bosniak and Vlach communities, manage to enter the Parliament.

Some **parties support this idea** (Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia, DUI, YOUR party, POEN). Democratic Party of Turks believes that the model of guaranteed seats for ethnic communities is an ideal model for avoiding pre-election coalitions that are generally not functional. POEN proposes introducing 15-20 guaranteed seats (which will be elected in a separate electoral district) to overcome “bi-ethnicism” and to have the candidates from ethnic communities elected by the larger parties in the pre-election coalitions. According to DUI, if such an agreement is reached, it will contribute to confirming the multi-ethnic character of the country. They believe that with the present model for entering the Parliament through pre-election coalitions, the question is to what extent these parties represent the interests of their ethnic communities, and to what extent the interest of the larger coalition partner. YOUR party has a similar view and believes that formally the smaller ethnic communities are adequately represented, but are placed in a subordinate and dependent position in relation to the larger political parties that can misuse them.

Although it did not explicitly state whether it supports guaranteed seats or not, Integra believes that this change will strengthen the civil concept and reduce ethnic divisions among the population.

Some of the parties **are explicitly against this proposal** (Alliance for Albanians, Alternativa). Alliance for Albanians believes that this proposal will lead to a certain number of ethnic communities being treated as separate, i.e. as minorities, which according to them is contrary to the principle of a multi-ethnic state. Alternativa has a negative view, which it argues with the possibility of abuse of the guaranteed seats due to the problem with the narrow majority.

SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE state that their parties have members from smaller ethnic communities, who are their candidates for MPs. Moreover, VMRO-DPMNE states that this is the direction in which they are thinking, and they do not have a specific view regarding the guaranteed seats. LDP believes that the current solution, i.e. the practice of building pre-election coalitions, ensures the participation of smaller parties, representatives of ethnic communities, in the Parliament and that the guaranteed seats will increase the ethnic division of the society.

The Union of Roma has a somewhat ambivalent view, as it points out that this can be seen as discrimination against certain ethnic communities (that they are not part of the people), and on the other hand they point out that “*Once elected, the*

question will be raised as to what will their role be? Will their opinion be sought on important and crucial questions or not? We know that ethnic division exists now and in everyday life but also in politics. That is why these sensitive issues need to be resolved in our country if we want democracy in government. “

Regarding the current representation of the parties of smaller ethnic communities in the Parliament, some of the parties think that it is sufficient (DOM, Alliance for Albanians, Integra, LDP, VMRO-DPMNE), while the Union of Roma, POEN, Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia and Alternativa think that the smaller ethnic parties are not sufficiently represented in the Parliament. According to YOUR party, formally they are adequately represented, but they are placed in a subordinate and dependent position in relation to the larger political parties. Democratic Alliance believes that only some of the smaller ethnic communities are not represented. SDSM believes that *“North Macedonia has a real temple of democracy that reflects the multi-ethnic character of the country. However, we believe that it is a good promotion or opening new opportunities for a step forward in terms of this question.”*

6. Previous public opinion research shows that citizens want the election model to change. The prevailing view is that they are not satisfied with the quality of the laws that are being passed, they think that the MPs represent the party and personal interests rather than the interests of the citizens, they think that the MPs are dependent on the will of the leader, they think that the change of the election model would lead to a better Parliament and would diminish the role of the leaders. What is the view of your political party, **how important is the view of the citizens to your party in terms of building an argument for change of the election model?**

What should the potential electoral reform in the country achieve? What would be the main goal of the electoral reform (equal value of each vote, intra-party democracy, better representation of certain groups, stable government, representative and inclusive democracy)?

Most parties state that the citizens' view is important or very important to them when building arguments for change of the election model. According to some of them, their proposals regarding electoral reform are actually a result of what the citizens demand.

DUI agrees with this, and believes that other stakeholders, such as NGOs and experts, should also be invited to give their opinion when designing the electoral reform. According to YOUR party, citizens' view is extremely important, but it should always be placed in the context of expert and scientific knowledge about the relevant matter. VMRO-DPMNE has a similar view, pointing out that in the case of the election model, it is an extremely professional matter.

When it comes to the purpose of electoral reform, a number of reasons and problems are stated that need to be addressed with such a reform. The most frequently cited arguments are related to the democratization of the parties and the society, the independence of the MPs from the leaders of the political parties, the equal value of the votes, as well as the better representation of the different groups and interests in politics. Some parties state that this will also increase the ideological offer in the Parliament. Parties do not discuss the potential impact that the change in the election

model would have on the stability of governments, in terms of a swap with the possibility of a larger number of smaller political parties entering the Parliament through independent participation in the elections (which is one of the main changes that the new election model would bring about). According to the Alliance for Albanians, “the question of a stable government is a secondary question, which should not conflict with the other goals of electoral reform. We believe that the electoral reform should put the citizens first, and then the questions about the government.”

The Union of Roma is an exception, according to them with the reform “*larger parties will not be able to have a strong ruling majority which raises the question of competitively establishing a government composed of all participants, which would increase the possibility of a dialogue between the government and the opposition on a higher level.*”

7. Some researchers in North Macedonia mention the German election model as an appropriate one⁵⁴ which would also respond to the demands of citizens (reducing the role of leaders, connecting MPs with voters, a better Parliament). Has this model been discussed in your party? How appropriate do you think this model is for North Macedonia?

When asked if this model was discussed in their party and how appropriate they think it is for the Republic of North Macedonia, from 14 surveyed parties, mostly **non-indicative data were obtained, i.e. 1 party did not answer, and in 9 parties this model was not discussed.** Although this model has not been discussed in most of the political parties, most of them are open for further consideration of this model, but believe that this process should be preceded by detailed analysis, consideration of the experiences of other countries, as well as expert debate in our society.

When it comes to the other parties, for Democratic Alliance, such a model would complicate the election process, LDP would stand behind any change that contributes to a more democratic society and greater citizen participation, and for Alternativa, the most appropriate model would be the proportional one with open lists.

8. If the mayors were elected in one round, the local elections would be cheaper, the political “bargaining” between the two rounds would be avoided, but the mayors would be elected by a smaller number of citizens, which may bring into question the legitimacy of the elected candidates. What should be the priority from these arguments? What is your party's view, local elections for mayors in one or two rounds?

Regarding this issue, the prevailing view among the political parties is that the mayoral elections should continue to be organized in two rounds. 10 out of total 14 parties (LDP, DOM, Democratic Alliance, DUI, BESA, Alliance for Albanians,

⁵⁴ The German election model is a combined model in which half of the MPs are elected by the majoritarian and half of them by the proportional model. Despite the fact that this model is combined, it primarily takes care of the appropriate proportional allocation of seats. Such a balance is ensured by subtracting the single-mandate seats from the total number of seats belonging to one party and the number is determined by voting for the party list (example: If Party X wins 30% of the total number of votes given for the party lists, which is equal to 179 MPs, and gets its MPs in 100 single-mandate electoral districts, it will get 79 seats from the party list). To ensure full proportionality, this model has the possibility for additional seats.

Alternativa, Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia, Union of Roma in Macedonia and POEN) agree with this method. In the context of the stated views, the prevailing argument is that the importance of the number of individual votes of the citizens as a democratic benefit, and the greater involvement of the citizens in this process have significantly greater weight than the economic aspect, i.e. the financial costs. The parties also emphasize the legitimacy of the mayors, which would be brought into question if the elections are organized in only one round.

According to SDSM, although the second round gives additional legitimacy to the elected mayors, they are ready to discuss this question.

The other three political parties (VMRO-DPMNE, YOUR party and Integra) support the introduction of one round for mayoral elections with the main argument that in this way political bargaining would be avoided and less budget funds would be spent. **In conclusion, the negative view and the reservation regarding the principle of electing a mayor in one round prevail, i.e. the opinion that the current method with two election rounds should be maintained prevails.**

Views of citizens on the change of election rules

In order to obtain more detailed information about the reflections of the citizens regarding the electoral changes, 6 focus groups were conducted, grouped by electoral districts in which the respondents vote. Criteria for selection were: not active in a party, age, gender, education, and ethnicity. The focus groups included:

	Nationality	Gender	
1 ED May 11, 2021	5 Macedonians	2 men	3 women
2 ED May 10, 2021	3 Macedonians, 2 Albanians, 1 Roma woman	2 men	4 women
3 ED May 17, 2021	6 Macedonians	2 men	4 women
4 ED May 18, 2021	6 Macedonians	3 men	3 women
5 ED May 19, 2021	4 Macedonians, 2 Albanians, 1 Turk	4 men	3 women
6 ED May 20, 2021	3 Albanians, 2 Macedonians	2 men	3 women
Total:	26 Macedonians, 7 Albanians, 1 Roma, 1 Turk	15 men	20 women

20 women and 15 men; 26 Macedonians, 7 Albanians, 1 Roma woman and 1 Turk; 10 people up to the age of 29, 10 at the age of 30 to 40, 7 at the age of 40 to 50, 5 at the age of 50-65 and 3 over the age of 65; 19 respondents with university and 16 with secondary education. Focus groups were conducted in the period from 10 to 20 May 2021. Analysis of the answers to the questions asked, as well as some of the reflections of the citizens are given below.

1. Interest in politics

What is your interest in politics? How often do you follow political content, for example, debate shows, on media (TV, radio, print, internet), social networks? How often do you discuss topics related to politics with friends, relatives, colleagues or other acquaintances?

Citizens are quite interested in politics, if we take into account watching political /debate shows and obtaining information through various media. Some of the respondents point out that they regularly watch the news, although they are not specifically interested in politics. Some of the respondents say that they regularly watch debate shows, while others avoid them because they think that there are too many of them, and they follow the current events through written portals. Politics is also often discussed with relatives and friends. However, some respondents avoid talking about politics with the people they interact with to avoid conflicts, which they consider to be common. Some of the citizens point out that politics is a very present topic in our society, which is difficult to avoid, thus they are well informed about the political

developments. Some are well-informed about current events because their work or studies involve the need to follow the situation in the society. Other reasons to follow politics are related to a job search, and this is pointed out by young people, or for other personal goals/needs, which is also pointed out by older respondents.

There are no significant differences between men and women, younger and older respondents, respondents of different ethnicities, or between electoral districts regarding this question. Especially in the electoral district 3, citizens are very interested in politics, while in the electoral district 6 they are the least interested compared to the other electoral districts.

2. Voting

How often do you vote? How do you decide who to vote for?

- **What influences your decision more, who is the party leader, who is the head of the electoral list, or if someone you respect is on the list?**
- **What influences your choice more, the election program, or the credibility gained by the parties, or the affinity you have for a particular party?**

Respondents from all electoral districts regularly vote in elections (in all or most of them) unless they are prevented from voting for some objective reason. One female respondent never votes in local elections. Two respondents point out that although they almost always vote, they do so in order not to have their right to vote misused by someone else. One of these respondents always spoils the ballot.

Some of the citizens vote for the option that they think at that moment can better answer the social problems, “do less damage” or vote for the opposition in order to change the government (vote against the government). Some of the respondents cast their vote based on the offers of the parties in their election programs, or because they are ideologically close to one of the parties. They often think that their decision to vote is influenced by a combination of the party program and the offered candidates. Competencies and qualities of the candidates on the party lists are also an important factor in making the decision to vote, especially in the local elections. Some of the respondents from the smaller areas point out that they voted in the local elections due to some connection (friends, relatives) with people from their area who were candidates for office of some of the political parties.

One respondent stated that she does not read the program because she does not believe it will be fulfilled, but votes to give a chance to a certain party in which there are more people she “trusts” (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian).

3. Representing the interests of the citizens

To what extent do you think that the MPs represent the interests of the citizens? Whose interests do they represent?

In all electoral districts and among all categories of citizens, there is a strong negative view and disappointment with the way the MPs perform their function of representing the interests of the citizens. Citizens cite a number of different reasons and examples about this. Most of them believe that the MPs pursue their personal and party interests. They believe that they are receiving excessive rewards/remunerations

for their engagement. They are mostly loyal to the party leaders and do not fulfill the pre-election promises made to the citizens.

“The least they do is represent the interests of the citizens. That is why I have not watched parliament broadcasts or debate shows for many years now. A complete disappointment in the election of MPs.” (man, over the age of 65, Macedonian).

“According to some analyses conducted in Macedonia, very few MPs speak in the Parliament. I am talking especially about the Albanian MPs. I think that everywhere there are some MPs who are really good, who represent the interests of the citizens. But in my opinion, they represent the interests of the parties and the interests in profit, individual profit, more. - So the interests of the parties and personal interests are put before the interests of the citizens.” (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian).

“For example, they start with false promises, they present a certain utopia, which in my opinion has no chance of becoming true, but when they are in the Parliament, they satisfy their interests or some party interests. They make sure to suit their needs. Those in power vote for the laws as they suit them.” (man, up to 29 years old, Macedonian)

“They represent interests, but their own interests, which are to win a “tender here and a tender there”. Maybe they’ll do something, but for the citizens 80-90% they don’t do anything. This is why all citizens are disappointed.” (man, 50 to 65 years old, Macedonian)

“Before they become MPs, they visit the inhabited places, they promise everything, they pat you on the shoulder, let’s win, then it’s easy, once they win, we don’t see them anymore. They put down roots there in Skopje, they get travel expenses, they fill their pockets with money and they are just a voting machine, no matter which party they belong to.” (man, 50 to 65 years old, Macedonian)

“MPs have a party task and a coalition task, if they are part of a coalition, they have a joint program and they defend the joint program at all costs. If they are in opposition, they also have some kind of cooperation, they are working on the plan to make sure that the Government delivers as little as possible to the public ... the interests of the citizens are not taken into account at all...” (man, 50-65 years old, Turk)

“Not the citizens’, but the personal interests come first, then their clan interests, then the party and other interests, everything else is populism. There are a small number of people who may start with good intentions, but those who do not represent our interests absolutely prevail. In our country, all people who get involved in politics, I have relatives who are in politics, even before joining the party and before the elections, they are all only interested in how to get money. So, their goal is money, not citizens’ interests.” (man, 30-40 years old, Albanian)

4. For a long time now, some political parties have been raising the question of changing the number of electoral districts from six to one electoral district, and the advocates for this change claim that this gives priority to the equal value of each vote. Are you familiar with this initiative and what do you think about the equal value of each vote?

- **(Additional question) According to the data from the last elections, on average, it took about 8.500 votes to become an MP from the fourth**

electoral district (that has the highest turnout), while it took about 6.190 votes to become an MP from the sixth electoral district (that has the lowest turnout). What is your view, should each vote of the citizens be equally valued, or are such differences allowed?

- **Introducing one electoral district would mean that there could be a larger number of smaller political parties in the Parliament, and on the other hand the larger parties would win fewer MPs, which usually means that they will need more smaller parties to build a stable government coalition. What is your view? Is it more important to have a stable Government (with stronger large parties) or is it more important for the parliamentary composition to more accurately reflect the views of the citizens?**
- **If the territory is not divided into regions (electoral districts), are you worried that most of the MPs will be from Skopje and Tetovo? Would other regions lose their representation in the Parliament?**

No differences in terms of ethnicity, age and gender were identified regarding this topic. There are differences only in relation to the electoral districts, there is less awareness among the respondents from Skopje about what does the change from six to one electoral district mean compared to the participants from other cities and electoral districts.

A continuous dissatisfaction with the developments in political life is visible among all respondents. According to the foregoing, the respondents believe that changes are needed in the way MPs are elected. There is general support for equal value of each vote, leaving more room for small political parties and introducing one electoral district for parliamentary elections. Some of the respondents do not have a clear picture of what the change from six to one electoral district means, they often associate it with the open lists, but these respondents also emphasize the need for change.

Respondents who are more familiar with the possibility for changing the number of electoral districts believe that the large parties (VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM and DUI) will not support the change because it does not suit them.

“Maybe such a political change should take place so that we can get away from this political madness that has been happening to us for years and only leads us to a larger political nonsense” (woman, 40-50 years old, Macedonian)

... “If votes are lost then why would we vote at all if our vote is worth nothing” (woman, up to 29 years old, Macedonian)

... “If we are talking about a fair and democratic country, one electoral district would be a great choice” (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian).

“They only see the interest of the party and not the interest of the country” (man, 50-56 years old, Turk).

“With one electoral district with more participants in the government coalition, I think the Government will be more controlled by the smaller political parties so that the big ones will not have the luxury of doing what they want, in the classic sense of the word.” (man, 30-40 years old, Albanian)

With the exception of a few respondents from Skopje, all others (regardless of ethnicity and age group) believe that the representation of smaller places and rural

areas should not be seen as a problem if the territory is organized in one electoral district. There are several explanations: at the moment there are not many MPs from the smaller places; with this division in 6 electoral districts there are often candidates for MPs from Skopje who are on the lists in other electoral districts; parties will make sure they have more representatives than ever before to attract voters; it is generally known for each place how many voters are there and how many MPs would enter the Parliament.

“No matter where they are from, when they become MPs, they become Skopje people. They buy apartments in Skopje, open businesses in Skopje. Skopje is a state within a state” (man, 40-50 years old, university education, Macedonian). In this regard it is also mentioned that almost half of the country lives in Skopje.

5. If the method remains the same, and it favors the large political parties, would you vote for a small party (this could mean that your vote could be lost if the party does not get enough votes for one MP in your electoral district)?

- **If the number of electoral districts changes resulting in only one electoral district, which would mean that all parties have equal chances to enter the Parliament, would you vote for a small party?**
- **Why would you vote for a small party, hypothetically speaking? Are you ready to vote for candidates for MPs from a smaller issue-based party (such as advocating for environmental protection or advocating for the rights of a certain ethnic or religious group)? Do you think that these votes are currently missing in the Parliament?**
- **In many countries, there is a practice of having guaranteed seats for smaller ethnic communities (usually one or two) and all parties representing the interests of these minorities are fighting for that seat. The way the election model is set in North Macedonia at the moment, parties of the smaller ethnic communities must build pre-election coalitions to enter the Parliament. What do you think about introducing guaranteed seats for smaller ethnic communities? Should they be introduced?**

The general view in all focus groups is that they would vote for a small political party, as more space should be left for small parties because they believe that changes can happen through smaller parties. The view on voting for a small party among the youngest participants is more emphasized, as well as the need for changes. In this aspect, there are differences in the ED5 and ED6 where it is clear that the respondents would be much more willing to give their vote for a small party if we had only one electoral district.

Regarding the answers to this question, there is a feeling of dissatisfaction among the citizens with the political life in Macedonia and the role of the large parties in that process. Citizens clearly express their dissatisfaction for the entire period from independence until today and believe that the two largest political parties are responsible for the stagnation (and according to some the setback) of the country.

“Just to make the large parties think, if in certain elections someone takes ten, fifteen MPs from them, someone who did not have a single MP before, it does not

mean that this someone will continue to exist as a large party, it will make them more conscious about their work" (man, up to 29 years old, Macedonian)"

... "in 30 years, not a single person that really cares, in true sense, for the country "(man, over the age of 65, Macedonian)"

... "To teach the large political parties a lesson, to wake them up a bit from the winter hibernation so that they would start doing something for the good of the citizens. To have a good, useful competition between them, why not." (woman, 30-40 years old, Macedonian)

... When was the last time an interpellation of a minister was voted by the Parliament? Interpellation is when a Minister makes mistakes in his/her work and those who elected him/her, from a legal point of view, from a systemic point of view, are his/her bosses, and those are the MPs, when was the last time a minister was fired from his/her job? (man, 40-50 years old, Macedonian).

... "if there is one electoral district, the smaller parties will have a larger break through and I as a young person can say that young people are already tired of these two parties that we call machineries and we want something new that will improve our lives" (man, up to 29 years old, Macedonian).

The reasons why they would not vote for a small party are in case it was established by a former member of a large party, or former officials who have achieved nothing.

"I would not vote for a small party if the president of that party is a former official of, for example DUI, VMRO or another party" (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian). In the same sense, it was added that they would not vote for "worn-out politicians" who have done nothing.

Most of the respondents have not voted for a coalition because a small political party was part of it.

Regarding the guaranteed seats for the smaller ethnic communities, the respondents from electoral districts 1, 2, 5 and 6 agree that they should be introduced, the views in ED3 are divided, and all respondents from ED4 believe that there is no justification for such a change and are against its introduction.

6. Open lists

According to the current method of electing MPs and councilors (at the local level), people vote for a party/coalition with a predetermined order of candidates to enter the Parliament or the municipal council. Some countries envisage that each voter, in addition to voting for a specific party, should also vote for its proposed candidate that they think should be ranked first, and other countries envisage that citizens should somehow create their own list and then by ranking the candidates from 1 to 3 or up to 5, to select the ones who are their favorites.

- **To what extent would you as voters like to have the opportunity to create your own list of priority MPs?**

Respondents across the country are generally positive about the introduction of the open list model, with certain exceptions. Respondents in the electoral districts 4 and 6 without exception agree that the open list model will have a positive impact on

the democratic development. In the electoral districts 1, 3 and 5, almost all respondents have the same opinion, but in these cases there were also respondents who more openly point out the weaknesses of the open list model and propose other solutions. An exception to this general picture is the electoral district 2 in which most respondents agreed that there is a lack of democratic maturity for effective implementation of open lists, although the idea is acceptable to them. That argument was sporadically used in the other focus groups as well, but got widespread support only in the focus group conducted with respondents from the electoral district 2.

The main arguments used to support this reform are that open lists will enhance the quality of elected representatives, strengthen the level of personal responsibility of candidates and elected officials, democratize political parties, and diminish the role of party leaders, as well as increase the role of voters in electing candidates (where voters will be truly able to vote for the candidate they trust the most). On the other hand, the "opponents" of this reform point out that open lists will not be successful in the Republic of North Macedonia because of the lack of democratic maturity (almost all respondents from the ED2); the human resources offered by the parties are not good enough, and that open lists do not guarantee better candidates because closed lists, on the other hand, are made up by ranking people who have already proven themselves in party organizations and in society.

Overall, it seems that the introduction of open lists has widespread support among citizens and that there are several arguments used to affirm this idea. However, a smaller number of citizens point out certain weaknesses of this model.

"It is not possible in our country. I wouldn't like to create my own list. I do not have the material to make a list." (man, over the age of 65, secondary education, Macedonian)

One female respondent (woman, from 30 to 40 years old, university education, Macedonian) believes that the ranking (preferential choice) would be more efficient if the voters could rank candidates from several parties at the same time, instead of from only one party.

"I think the idea is great, [...], maybe it is ideal but in our country it may be unattainable. (woman, from 30 to 40 years old, Macedonian)

"I think we are still not aware of what democracy is and what it should do and how we should use it in our country, and we are too emotional as a nation when it comes to this question. So, we are not that advanced and we have not reached that goal of being able to choose people." (woman, up to 29 years old, Roma woman).

"... in my opinion, the best thing the country can do is to have open lists. The awareness will be achieved over the years." (woman, up to 29 years old, university education, urban area, Albanian). This female respondent states that open lists would lead to a higher level of personal responsibility among the elected representatives.

"There must be open lists, this should not be an issue. At least people from the smaller places should be given the opportunity to vote for their candidates, to give them at least a chance to enter the Parliament. This should not be an issue, they should go hand in hand, one with the other." (explanation: "one with the other" refers to the overall reform towards having one electoral district and open lists).

"diminish the authority of the party leader that he/she currently has in creating such party lists" (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian)

“We should try the open lists in our country, to see how it will work, because the current practice shows that now, with closed lists, we have the same MPs repeating from one cycle to another. We have eternal MPs. If the lists are open we have a chance to choose the person we think is better for us and who will do something...” (man, 30-40 years old, Albanian)

“It will not work in our country because in a larger political party, if a candidate was the hundredth on the list means he/she was not good, otherwise he/she would not be hundredth, but he/she would be second, third, fifth. In one structure, someone was the hundredth, he/she would not have been the hundredth if he/she was really good and if he/she was worth something. “

7. Local elections

We will have local elections in October or later. Mayoral elections, as you know, are organized in two election rounds. Everyone competes in the first round, and in the second one, only the two candidates who won the most votes. But what if the local elections are organized only in one round. They would cost much cheaper, there would be no possibility for political bargaining (which is of personal or party interest) between the two rounds, but mayors would be elected by a smaller number of citizens. What is your view, should local elections be in one or two rounds?

Having the information that if the mayoral elections are conducted in one round, the elections will cost much cheaper and the possibility for political bargaining will be reduced, the citizens who participated in the focus groups largely welcome the idea of reform to only one election round for mayors. Many respondents point to the economic benefits of this reform.

“I think it is better to have one round because all elections, both local and parliamentary, cost a lot, and that is all at our expense, of the citizens of Macedonia. That is why I think that having one round is better.” (woman, over the age of 65, Macedonian)

“I think that in many aspects it is better to go with one election round. From an economic point of view, it would be cheaper and in terms of quality nothing will change, the result will not change at all. There are very small chances that something will change in the second round.” (man, 50-65 years old, Turk)

“1 round, to be cheaper.” (woman, 40-50 years old, Macedonian)

Also, many of the respondents refer to the harmfulness of the phenomenon of “political bargaining” between the two election rounds.

“I’m in favor of one round. Whoever is good should be elected on time, whoever is a good mayor. Let’s go with one round. No bargaining after that round.” (man, over the age of 65, Albanian)

“In this way we could avoid that party and political bargaining that takes place after the first round of voting. More specifically, in [MUNICIPALITY OF THE RESPONDENT] in the previous elections held at the local level in 2014, if I am not mistaken, in the first round the person who was nominated by [PARTY 1] won the majority of votes. In the second round, there were candidates from [PARTY 2] and

[PARTY 1] and in the end, based on some political bargaining, the candidate who had much less votes than the candidate of the other political party won. In this way we will be able to avoid this political and party bargaining that takes place from the end of the first until the second round of voting.” (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian).

- **If your candidate does not win enough votes to enter the second round, would you vote again, but for another candidate?**
- **Have you ever had such an experience, to vote for one candidate in the first round, and for another candidate in the second round?**

Respondents have various experiences with voting in the second round of elections. Some of the respondents voted for a different candidate in the second round than the one they voted for in the first round, some express willingness to do so even though they haven't had such an experience, and some are categorical that they would never vote for another candidate in the second round and that they have not done so before. It seems, however, that these differences are highly individual and are not related to the gender, ethnic, age and educational characteristics of the respondents, as well as to their place of residence or electoral district.

8. Youth policies

To what extent do you see your interests as part of the Government policies and the laws passed by the Parliament? Have you thought about how the interests of young people can be more represented at the national level?

- **Do you think that there are enough young candidates proposed for MPs, mayors and councilors? (If not, do you think this is due to a lack of experience or something else, perhaps a lack of space left by the older candidates).**
- **Are you ready to vote for young candidates (under 30)?**

Respondents from all focus groups, especially young respondents, predominantly believe that the interests of young people are not a priority for the Government and the Parliament, and some of the respondents also recognize the lower involvement of young people in the election process.

They believe that more efforts should be made to improve the welfare of young people, to get them more involved in social processes and policy making. *"... young people do not have real advocates for their rights in the Parliament at all, and even the Law on Youth Participation, which was finally adopted last year, was lobbied by an NGO, and not because someone in the Parliament showed interest in young people.” (woman, 30-40 years old, Macedonian)*

Some of the respondents stated that young people themselves and their proactivity are the reason for the insufficient consideration of young people in public policies – *“we the young people can be satisfied with very little ... some of the large parties can tell us that they will find us a job with a contract for indefinite duration, and that's it, our voice is silenced.” (woman, up to 29 years old, Roma woman).*

Suggestions to improve the situation: strengthening the voice of universities and university forums, encouraging youth platforms, youth simulation of parliament and government, representative quotas for young people, greater interest of young people to participate in training, seminars and processes for raising the public awareness.

A significant part of the respondents believes that there is a satisfactory number of young MPs, municipal councilors and mayors, however, some believe that there is room for greater involvement.

Younger respondents from all focus groups are slightly more enthusiastic about voting for young candidates (energy, enthusiasm and professional skills).

The respondents made a remark about the inexperience of young people for certain high positions at which they often see them, as well as the impact that older people can have on them.

...it is not right for a young person to hold the office of a minister or a mayor as his/her first employment, but they should go through certain filters..." (man, 30-40 years old, Albanian).

"When they sit in that chair, they change their image, they are not approachable, they are only interested in a percentage, a profit ... the same as those in the Parliament. When they are young, they are good, but then, whether because of the office they hold or because someone misuses them ... they are not the same people." (man, 50-65 years old, Macedonian).

Some of the respondents would not vote for a young person for mayor, but agree to vote for young people for representative functions, with a greater preference for voting for young people for municipal councilors rather than at the national level.

9. Women in politics

In the last 15 years, the laws have been changed in the direction of having a greater representation of women in the Parliament (now there are about 40% women). Do you think that there should be an equal number of men and women in the Parliament, 50-50%? Would you personally support such a change in the Electoral Code, if it was adopted with a broad political consensus?

- **Do you think that there are enough women candidates proposed for MPs, mayors and councilors? If not, why is that? (lack of trust or experience, lack of good candidates, politics is a dirty job, there is no room left by older men, or maybe they do not have enough time to devote to politics because they have to take care of their home and family)**
- **Do you see an increasing number of women in politics who deserve your respect?**
- **Is there a woman in your area/municipality that you would be happy to vote for?**

The prevailing view is that men and women should be equally represented in the Parliament; all women respondents supported the concept of equal gender

representation in the Parliament. *"Equal opportunities for political participation, but also motivation for women in the future" (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian)*

Focus group participants from ED 5 most unequivocally and unanimously stated their opinion in favor of such an equal ratio, while the answers in the focus group from ED 3 contain the most gender-insensitive speech.

Some of the respondents state that it is not all about the quota, but we should work on the social context and the encouragement of women and only in that way they will be represented in the segments for which there are no quotas *"women are represented only where there are quotas, and that is in the parliament and in the local councils, while in managerial positions in the Government and in general, where there are no quotas, women are underrepresented. There are only 4 women ministers, I think, in the Government, there are only 6 women mayors out of 81 municipalities... There is also the membership in management and supervisory boards and management bodies where women are not represented at all."* (woman, 30-40 years old, Macedonian)

A small number of respondents believe that women in the Republic of North Macedonia have the same rights as men and that there is no need to make additional efforts in this regard.

The prevailing view among the respondents from all focus groups is that there are not enough women candidates for MPs, mayors and councilors, but that, in general, it is also necessary to have more women in all positions, to be more involved in all political and social processes.

They state the following main reasons for not having enough women candidates:

- the patriarchal traditional mentality in the country;

"There is a larger confidence when one thing is said by a man rather than by a woman it is prevailing." (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian)

- Lack of will on the part of women to get involved in politics due to previous bad social treatment such as marginalization, discrimination, manipulation, lack of respect and authority, inappropriate speech aimed at the prominent women, lack of domestic support.

"when something is published on the portals about a woman official, there are many comments which are insulting her morality, not every woman can deal with them ... she will distance herself from politics" (woman, up to 29 years old, Albanian).

Some of the respondents state that women should continuously fight for their rights, while some believe that men also bear responsibility, i.e. that they should work harder on the implementation of women's rights.

Do the respondents see an increasing number of women in politics who deserve their respect? The received answers are divided, but the prevailing answer is that there are no particular women in politics who deserve their respect or who they would vote for.

The view that there are no women on the political scene who deserve respect and that there is no particular woman they would vote for is most characteristic among the respondents from ED 1, but this view also prevails in ED 2. On the other hand, the most inclined to vote for a specific woman from their political or social context, as well

as to show respect for women in politics are the respondents from ED 6, and also respondents from ED 5 predominantly identified women in office that deserve respect, but point out that such women are mostly politically active at the state level, and not at the local level.

Conclusions from political parties' questionnaires

- Most political parties agree with the introduction of one electoral district (with the exception of the Albanian political party bloc)
 - Regarding this aspect, they do not recognize any risk in relation to the representation of smaller places and rural areas (exceptions are VMRO-DPMNE and DUI)
- There are divided views regarding the change of the election formula (almost half of the parties believe that a change towards equal value of each vote should be made and favoring of large parties should stop, and on the other hand are the parties that do not have a clear position yet, believe that these reforms must be considered in the context of major changes and wider public debate, or that it is not yet time for changes).
- A significant part of the parties is against the introduction of an electoral threshold in case of having one electoral district (exception are Alternativa, VMRO-DPMNE, DUI, Union of Roma in Macedonia)
- Most of the political parties are in favor of introducing open lists (with the exception of VMRO-DPMNE and Democratic Alliance) and they do not recognize any risk in relation to the representation of women as a result of this change (with the exception of YOUR party).
- Most of the parties are against the introduction of guaranteed seats for the smaller ethnic communities (with the exception of: Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia, DUI, YOUR party, POEN, Integra)
- Most of the parties state that the citizens' view is important to them when building arguments for change of the election model (according to some of them, their proposals regarding the electoral reform are actually a result of what the citizens demand);
- Electoral reforms should achieve: democratization of the parties and the society, independence of the MPs from the leaders of the political parties, equal value of the votes, better representation of the different groups and interests in politics.
- Most of the parties have not discussed the German model and its appropriateness (but they are open for further discussion and believe that this process should be preceded by detailed analysis, consideration of the experiences of other countries, as well as expert debate in our society).

- The prevailing view is that the mayoral elections should continue to be organized in two rounds (with the exception of VMRO-DPMNE, YOUR political party and Integra).

Conclusions from the focus group discussions with citizens

- Generally, there is an interest in politics and political topics.
- The majority of respondents regularly vote in elections.
- In all electoral districts and among all categories of citizens, there is a strong negative view and disappointment with the way the MPs perform their function of representing the interests of the citizens. They believe that MPs pursue their personal and party interests, they are mostly loyal to the party leaders and do not fulfill the pre-election promises made to the citizens.
- The respondents believe that changes are needed in the way MPs are elected. There is general support for equal value of each vote, leaving more room for small political parties and introducing one electoral district for parliamentary elections.
- Most of the respondents believe that the representation of smaller places and rural areas should not be seen as a problem if the territory is organized in one electoral district.
- The general view is that if they would vote for a small political party, they should be given more space because they think that changes can happen through them. They would be more willing to vote for a small party if there was only one electoral district.
- There is a prevailing positive view on introducing guaranteed seats for smaller ethnic communities (with the exception of ED4, divided views in ED3).
- Generally, there is a positive view about the open lists (only few participants point out negative aspects).
- Citizens who participated in the focus groups largely agree with the idea of electing mayors in one election round. Many respondents point to the economic benefits of this reform as well as reducing the possibility of political bargaining between the two rounds.
- Respondents from all focus groups, especially young respondents, predominantly believe that the interests of young people are not a priority for the Government and the Parliament, and some of the respondents also recognize the lower involvement of young people in the election process.

- Most of them would vote for a young candidate for councilor at the local level (or MP at the national level).
- The prevailing view is that men and women should be equally represented in the Parliament; all women respondents supported the concept of equal gender representation in the Parliament. In addition to introducing quotas, they believe that people's awareness should be raised.
- The prevailing view is that there are not enough women candidates for office (especially where there are no quotas).
- There is an awareness about voting for women, but there are not enough citizens who recognize such examples.

Comparison	
Political parties	Citizens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, IN FAVOR of introducing one electoral district • Generally, IN FAVOR of introducing open lists • Most of them are AGAINST the introduction of guaranteed seats • Citizens' view is IMPORTANT to them when building arguments for change of the election model • They are predominantly IN FAVOR of electing mayors in two election rounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, IN FAVOR of introducing one electoral district • Prevailing view IN FAVOR of introducing open lists • Prevailing view IN FAVOR of introducing guaranteed seats • There is a strong NEGATIVE view and disappointment with the way the MPs represent the interests of the citizens • They are predominantly AGAINST the election of mayors in two election rounds

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