

REPORT

GENDER BALANCE OF POWER

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN
REGIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
IN THE UK AND GERMANY

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SUMMARY

60-SECOND SUMMARY

Women make up just 33 per cent of local councillors in England, 27 per cent in Wales and 24 per cent in Scotland. The picture is worse when we focus on local leadership: just 15 per cent of local authority leaders in England are women. These figures demonstrate significant under-representation of women in local government. This is important because women are disproportionately affected by services under local government control, such as social care and childcare, but also because local government is and should be a key talent pipeline for regional and national government. As the UK devolves power to the regions, it is vital that we ensure any new democratic institutions and systems set up promote gender equality rather than restrict it.

While many other countries are grappling with similar issues, there is a lack of evidence of what works in improving representation of women in local politics. This research addresses that gap by focusing on Germany – both how Germany performs in terms of women’s representation at the local and state level, and what initiatives and policies have been pursued to improve this performance.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

UK

- Thirty-three per cent of councillors in England, 27 per cent in Wales and 24 per cent in Scotland are women.
- Fifteen per cent of local authority leaders in England are women.
- Of the 16 directly elected mayors currently in England and Wales, only four are women.
- Progress in improving women’s representation has stalled: the proportion of women councillors in England has increased from 27.8 per cent to 33 per cent in the past 20 years.

Germany

- Women represent 32.5 per cent of members of state parliaments and 24 per cent of members of local parliaments representing large municipalities.
- Three out of 16 state prime ministers are women, and 10 per cent of mayors and district chief executives. Women make up 39.9 per cent of heads of state ministries and 23.6 per cent of heads of departments of local public administrations.
- Of top positions in administrative district and municipal councils, 10.6 per cent are women.
- Between the mid-80s and 90s, there was an increase in gender representation due to the introduction of quotas for women by several parties. Since then there have been no systematic or significant improvements.

BARRIERS TO EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND INITIATIVES TO REDUCE THEM

- Supply-side barriers – women are less likely to be members of political parties, are less likely to have the self-confidence and political efficacy to stand, and may be held back by greater caring responsibilities compared to men.
Initiatives include the Helene Weber Kolleg, which supports women interested in running for office as well as those looking to progress with training and cross-party mentoring.
- Demand-side barriers – sexism, both direct, and indirect through political culture, can hold women back from reaching elected and leadership positions. Party recruitment and selection processes are key in determining representation of women.
Initiatives include voluntary quotas within parties. The party with the longest-standing and highest quota (the Green Party) has 40.1 per cent female councillors, which is twice as many as the party with no quotas (FDP), at 18.1 per cent female councillors.
- Systemic barriers – electoral systems, including plurality systems and single-member constituencies, can lead to lower representation of women.
Initiatives include electoral systems (which vary by state) that have been shown to lead to better representation of women – such as proportional representation with fixed-party lists and multi-member districts.

LESSONS FOR THE UK AND GERMANY

Clear from our research is that parties are the gatekeepers of power in both the UK and Germany; their structures, selection procedures, programmes and cultures are key in determining and improving gender representation. Also clear is that while policies such as quotas can accelerate progress towards equal gender representation, they alone are not enough to reach full gender equality numerically and qualitatively. Both interventions that seek to broaden the pool of candidates and support them in their political journey, as well as interventions that seek to break down prejudiced structures and cultures, are necessary to achieve this.

Drawing lessons from the UK, German political parties may be interested in exploring voluntary all-women shortlists at the local and regional levels. The UK's experience shows that while this can make sizeable changes, it must be implemented by parties with strong electoral support, and ideally in the most winnable or safe seats, in order for change to happen quickly.

There are several lessons the UK can learn from Germany, including the following.

Better data collection and comparison between areas

Mandatory reporting of gender representation in local and regional government would draw attention to the lack of representation of women at these levels, and focus activity in this space by parties. Rankings can help create competition between areas and parties to demonstrate that they reflect and represent the electorate in a low-cost way.

Greater use of quotas

The introduction of quotas by German parties in the 80s led to a large shift in female representation which has not been replicated with the use of empowerment programmes in later years. While the Labour Party in the UK uses a form of quotas, other parties have weak gender requirements and are lagging behind. Greater use of quotas could dramatically accelerate the representation of women at the local level. All parties, including Labour, should review their own quota rules and seek to improve and enforce how they are implemented.

Institutionalised support for gender representation in local politics

The German national government has demonstrated greater efforts than the UK government to prioritise gender equality in both policy-making and local representation, including publishing an annual 'atlas' profiling gender equality in Germany. There is a risk the UK will fall behind other European countries in institutional support for gender equality in local decision-making if steps are not taken.

Cross-party networks and comprehensive empowerment programmes

The UK has some programmes to encourage women into and support women in local politics, but they are either in the fledgling stage, or are not as comprehensive, open to all political denominations or institutionalised as the German equivalents. UK groups should observe the experience of German initiatives and transfer learning to improve their own programmes. Both interventions that seek to support candidates, as well as interventions that seek to break down prejudiced structures and cultures, are necessary to achieve equal representation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women make up just 33 per cent of local councillors in England, 26 per cent in Wales and 24 per cent in Scotland (Bazeley et al 2017; Trenow and Olchawski 2016). The picture is worse when we focus on local leadership: just 15 per cent of local authority leaders in England are women (CFWD 2015). The UK's experience is mirrored across the European Union (EU), where women account on average for 32 per cent of regional assembly members and local councillors, a figure that has only shifted by two percentage points in two years (European Commission 2013).

Besides the significant under-representation these figures demonstrate, there are two additional reasons to be concerned. Firstly, there is a pipeline issue. Local government is and should be a key talent pipeline for regional and national government, where women's under-representation is often most visible (only 30 per cent of MPs). For this to change, it is vital that local and sub-regional government – often the entry point into politics – becomes more gender balanced so as to maximise the number of women progressing upwards.

Secondly, a lack of women in local or regional government results in a democratic deficit. Women are disproportionately affected by services under local government control, such as social care and childcare. In the UK, as more power is transferred to local and sub-regional levels with the roll-out of devolution, there is a real risk that this will reinforce existing gender inequalities. As new democratic institutions and systems are set up, we should ensure that they promote gender equality rather than restrict it.

While organisations such as the Fawcett Society and the Electoral Reform Society have researched local gender representation in the UK, there is a significant gap in the research relating to what works in improving the situation, and how this should be applied specifically to new institutions created through the regional devolution process. The UK is far from alone in grappling with these issues; most countries in the world have political systems and local politics with majority male representation, and many are making efforts to improve the representation of women. Yet information on what has worked elsewhere and on transferable lessons for the UK is not readily available.

This research aims to fill this gap by focusing on Germany. Like the UK, Germany has multiple tiers of democratic government. In Germany, 'devolution' is more developed, in that the country has a fully federal system; Germany therefore offers a useful comparison for the UK as the UK embarks upon greater devolution. The two countries both have large economies and liberal societies, with women likely to be in work, though gender equality in the workplace and equal labour market participation has not been achieved in either. Similarly to the UK and relevant to this project, the percentage of women in political decision-making at the

municipality level in Germany has stalled at about 25 per cent of the total in the past 20 years.

Germany is therefore a helpful case study to compare and contrast with the UK.

In this paper, we set out:

- How the UK and Germany perform on gender representation at the local level, and what steps have been taken by different actors to improve the recruitment and progression of women through local politics. We focus on England as the largest UK nation.
- Analysis of barriers preventing women from entering and progressing in local politics.
- Case study initiatives from Germany that have sought to improve the representation of women in local government.
- A summary of the main similarities and differences with the UK, and key learning for both countries.

Our research has been informed by desk research, literature review and interviews with experts and staff of political parties in Germany. The research in this comparative study will feed into a larger report examining gender representation in local and regional government in the UK and comparator countries, due to be published in summer 2017.

The structure of German local government

In Germany, the highest political level is the national level (Bund). Beneath this tier of government, there are 16 federal states (Länder). Each of these has a parliament, minister-president, and executive cabinet alongside an independent judiciary. Within Länder, there are districts (Kreise, Landkreise; 323 in total) and urban districts (kreisfreie Städte; 114 in total) with elected assemblies. At the most local level, cities and municipalities elect 11,000 municipal assemblies (Stadtrat, Gemeinderat). Germany has a very high number of councils relative to other European countries; approximately 14,000 (Sundström and Stockemer 2015).

Adapted from Eder et al (2015).

The structure of England's local government

In the UK, parliamentary constituencies are represented by Members of Parliament at the national level. Beneath this level of government there are the devolved nations Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, each of which has its own assembly or parliament with powers over investment, public services, much social policy and, in some cases, fiscal policy. England, the primary focus of this research, does not have a devolved assembly. Within England, local government varies by region; areas either have unitary authorities that have responsibility for a wider range of local services (55 unitary authorities, 36 metropolitan districts, 33 London boroughs and the Isle of Scilly)

or two tiers of local government (27 county councils and 201 district councils within these), where local services are delivered either by a district council or, at a wider level, by a county council. At the most local level, some areas also have elected town and parish councils with responsibility for very local services.

Since 2000, the Greater London Authority has had shared responsibility for some local services and strategic planning together with London boroughs. London has its own assembly and directly elected mayor – an additional layer of government to local authorities. Sixteen local authorities also have directly elected mayors in place while, more recently, other regions have agreed deals with national government to take on new powers and responsibilities as ‘combined authorities’ and, in most cases, to introduce metro-mayors. Combined authorities are led by the political leaders of member local authorities, the metro-mayor, if there is one, and representatives from local partners, in particular Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). For example, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has existed since 2011, bringing together 10 councils in the area. This year, Greater Manchester will elect its first mayor, who will sit as the 11th member of the combined authority.

2. HOW DO THE TWO SYSTEMS COMPARE?

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN GERMANY

A high number of women councillors is not sufficient for gender equality in local government; qualitative equality including power and control over domains is necessary for that to be the case. However, statistics give a good overview of the position of women in politics.

Due to the large number of councils in Germany, it is difficult to track the gender of all councillors, and there is no mandatory reporting. Particularly at the most local level, statistics detailing gender representation are not readily available. Individual Länder have instituted data collection, such as Baden-Württemberg, and, at the national level, the Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ), or Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, conducts surveys of local councillors and publishes the results alongside what electoral data is available (Federal Ministry 2016). The Heinrich Böll Foundation, associated with the Green Party, also gathers information on representation in German cities and publishes them in a regular ranking of cities (Holtkamp et al 2017).

Germany performs better at higher levels of government in terms of number of female representatives. Whereas 36.5 per cent of members of the national parliament are women, only 32.5 per cent of state parliament members are and 24 per cent of local parliament members representing more than 10,000 inhabitants (Kletzing 2016a).

As well as being under-represented in assemblies in parliaments, women are under-represented in local and regional leadership positions in Germany. While Germany currently has a female chancellor and women in a third of federal minister roles, only three out of 16 state prime ministers are women, and 10 per cent of mayors and district chief executives. Women make up 39.9 per cent of heads of state ministries and 23.6 per cent of heads of departments of local public administrations (Kletzing 2016a). In 2015, of 168 heads of government, ministers and senators working for state governments, 37.5 per cent were women (3rd Gender Equality Atlas for Germany 2016). Yet this masks large variation, with the percentage of women in these positions by state varying between 10 and 70 per cent. In addition, only three out of 16 states were headed by a woman (North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland). However, encouragingly, the proportion of women in state leadership positions rose 12 percentage points between 2008 and 2015, to 38 per cent.

TABLE 2.1

The share of female local councillors varies dramatically by state in Germany

State	Average share of elected women for region (2015)	Women as proportion of administrative district and municipal councillors (2015)	Percentage change since 2008	Women as proportion of state parliament (2015)	Percentage change in state parliament proportion since 2008
Berlin	41.9	42	+3	35	-5
Bremen	38.8	29	-6	34	-5
Hamburg	32.7	38	+8	30	-3
Hesse	33.0	33	+1	32	-2
Schleswig-Holstein	29.5	31	+1	32	+2
North Rhine-Westphalia	28.8	30	+1	30	+3
Rhineland-Palatinate	26.5	28	+1	42	+4
Brandenburg	26.0	26	-1	35	-6
Bavaria	25.2	26	+1	29	-2
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	24.8	24	+2	28	+3
Thuringia	23.3	25	+2	39	+4
Lower Saxony	22.6	27	+2	29	-2
Baden-Württemberg	18.7	21	+3	18	-6
Saarland	20.0	26	+2	39	+6
Saxony-Anhalt	19.3	20	+1	39	+8
Saxony	19.2	21	+2	32	+4

Source: Adapted from the Federal Ministry 3rd Gender Equality Atlas for Germany (2016) and Sundström and Stockemer, 'What determines women's political representation at the local level? A fine-grained analysis of the European regions' (Sundström and Stockemer 2015)

TABLE 2.2

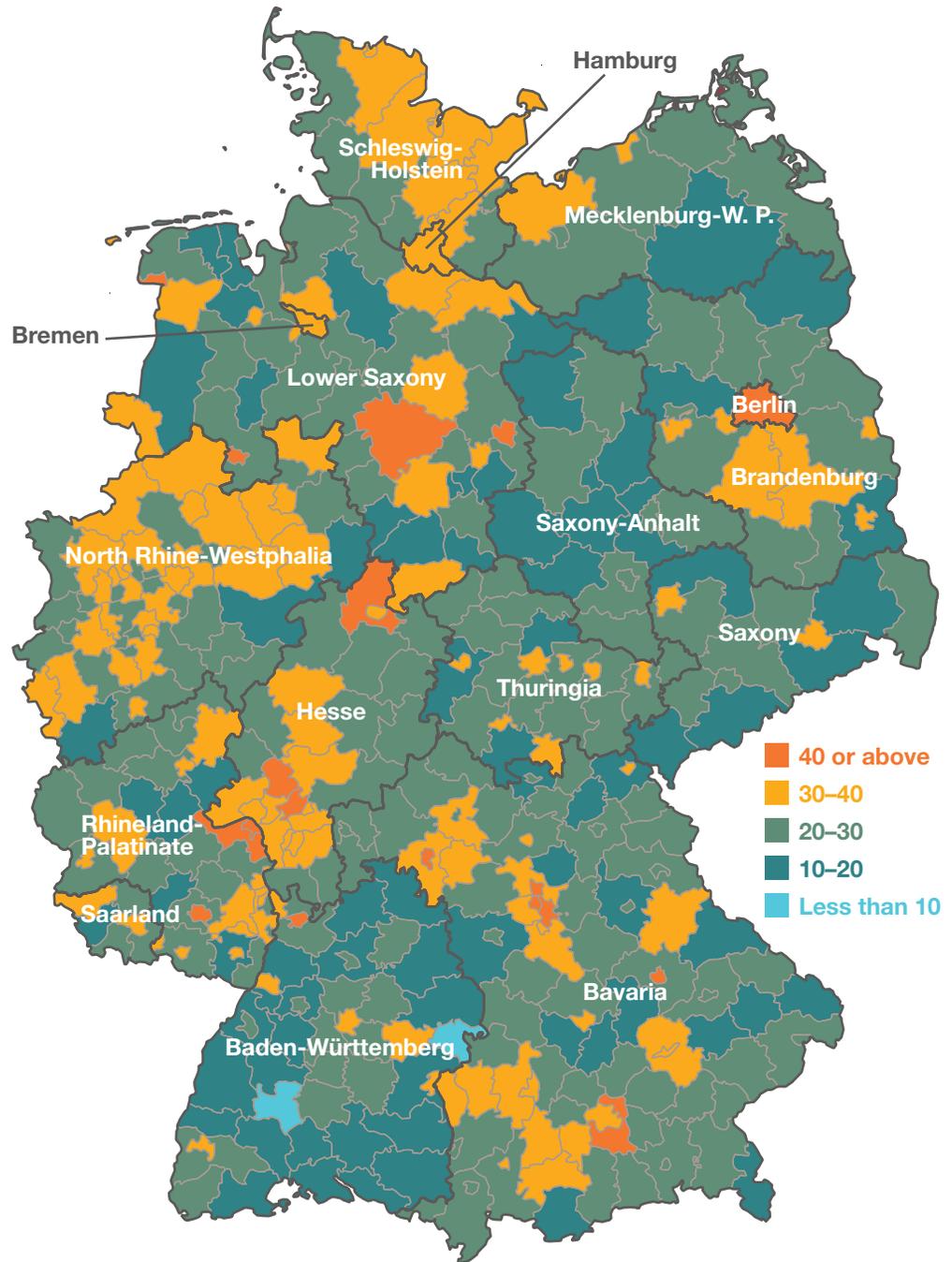
Percentage of women heads of government, ministers and senators in state governments, 2015

State	% of women heads of government, ministers and senators in state governments, 2015	Change vs 2008 (percentage points)
Baden-Württemberg	31	+13
Bavaria	42	+17
Berlin	33	-11
Brandenburg	30	0
Bremen	50	+7
Hamburg	42	+5
Hesse	21	+3
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	33	0
Lower Saxony	40	+20
North Rhine-Westphalia	36	+11
Rhineland-Palatinate	70	+33
Saarland	33	+21
Saxony	40	+20
Saxony-Anhalt	10	-20
Schleswig-Holstein	50	+40
Thuringia	50	+40

Source: Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 3rd Gender Equality Atlas for Germany (2016)

FIGURE 2.1

Percentage of women in administrative district and municipal councils, 2015



Source: Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, *3rd Gender Equality Atlas for Germany* (2016)

At the local level, gender representation in leadership positions is worse; of 435 top positions in administrative district and municipal councils, just 46 positions (10.6 per cent) were held by women. In the worst performing states, Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia, this figure stood at just four per cent, compared to 38 per cent in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the best performing state (ibid). Furthermore, IPPR interviewees reported

gendered differences in which policy portfolios men and women councillors are likely to hold, with women more likely to have responsibility for traditionally ‘female’ roles such as social policy.

German political parties have different proportions of women in local government positions; as a general rule, parties on the left, which also have quota systems, have a higher proportion of women representatives (Holtkamp et al 2017). Descriptive representation is also higher in larger cities. The interaction between these two factors is shown in the following table.

TABLE 2.3
Proportion of women councillors in municipal parliaments (2007)

Number of inhabitants in municipality ('000s)	SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany)	CDU/CSU (German Christian Democratic Party and Christian-Social Union of Bavaria)	Grüne (Green Party)	FDP (Free Democratic Party)	PDS/Die Linke (The Left)
Over 100	37.8	28.1	48.2	24.6	35.7
50–100	31.5	24.6	43.2	17.6	36.9
20–50	30.3	20.7	39.0	16.8	38.5
10–20	26.2	19.1	35.2	17.5	32.9
Total	29.6	21.1	40.1	18.1	36.0

Source: Holtkamp and Schnittke 2008

Gender representation at the local level has stagnated in Germany in recent years. Between the mid-80s and 90s, there was an increase in gender representation due to the introduction of quotas for women by several parties. Since then, there have been no systematic or significant improvements (Kletzing 2016a, 2016b). Barriers to greater gender representation are discussed in chapter 3, and the use of voluntary quotas in Germany is discussed in chapter 4.

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND

The picture at devolved national, regional and local levels varies. While local councils in England have historically delivered greater representation for women than local councils in other devolved nations, this has recently plateaued – at around a third (33 per cent), having already been as high as 27.8 per cent in 1997 (Bazeley et al 2017). Analysis in 2008 revealed that this can range from as low as three to as much as 49 per cent of elected councillors across England’s local authorities (Bochel and Bochel 2008). Compared to councils in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, England performs best on this measure.

In 2014/15, only 15 per cent of council leaders were women (CFWD 2015) and of the 16 directly elected mayors currently in England and Wales, only four are women (Trenow and Olchawski 2016). Research by Bochel and Bochel (2008) found as few as 11 councils in which both leader and deputy

leader were women, while 237 had all-male leadership and eight per cent all-male cabinets.

Within the constituent councils of the combined authorities electing mayors in May 2017, 38 are led by male councillors and only one by a woman (Oldham). As combined authorities are made up of the indirectly elected leaders of constituent councils, this means combined authority members are overwhelmingly male. Including deputy leaders in decision-making is unlikely to dramatically change this; as few as nine of these councils has a woman deputy leader. The election of metro-mayors in May 2017 does not offer much hope; the Electoral Reform Society has predicted that only one in six mayoralities will go to a female mayor, and only seven out of 39 candidates are women.

As in national politics (Allen 2012), women councillors are more likely to hold portfolios for 'caring' policy areas, for example social services, housing and health (Bochel and Bochel 2008). They are less likely to work on corporate affairs, regeneration, economic development and transport, which have been the focus areas of combined authorities to date.

Representation varies across parties, with as many as 37.9 and 36.7 per cent of Green Party and Labour councillors in England being women respectively, and 33.4 per cent of Liberal Democrat councillors, but as few as 29.1 and 11.4 per cent in the case of Conservatives and UK Independence Party (Ukip) respectively (Apostolova and Cracknell 2016). As in Germany, the party with the longest-standing quotas (Labour, see chapter 5) has the greatest number of women councillors.

3.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN IN GERMANY ENTERING AND PROGRESSING IN LOCAL POLITICS

To understand why women are under-represented and why certain interventions to tackle under-representation do or do not work requires an analysis of barriers to greater involvement in politics – either entering politics, or staying and progressing into leadership positions. There are multiple stages at which these may occur on a woman’s journey into local or regional politics. To get elected to local government in Germany, generally one must be a member of a party, and go to the local association meetings. Local associations propose candidates for the local council, constructing a list. There are two routes for individuals into this first stage; they may either actively volunteer to stand, or the local party association will look for candidates when there are not enough by approaching individuals in their members’ networks. For small districts, local party associations may work together to seek out and encourage candidates.

Potential barriers can be understood using the following schema linked to the stages of the political journey:

Supply-side barriers: candidate pool

- Involvement in party politics
- Self-belief to stand and confidence
- Availability

Demand-side barriers: political parties and voter preferences

- Political culture
- Party processes for recruitment and selection

Systemic barriers: electoral systems

- Electoral systems
- Type of position available

(Adapted from Holtkamp and Schnittke 2008, with additional categories from literature and interviews.)

SUPPLY-SIDE BARRIERS: CANDIDATE POOL

Involvement in party politics

Similarly in the UK, over two-thirds of party members are men – the most prominent discrepancy between the demographics of voters and members. The proportion of men is greater for Labour (69 per cent) and

the Liberal Democrats (71 per cent) than it is for the Conservatives (61 per cent) (Whiteley 2009).

TABLE 3.1

In Germany (as well as the UK), men are much more likely to be members of a political party: in 2015, just 15.4 per cent of AfD members and 20.1 per cent of CSU members were women

Party	% of members who are women (31 December 2015)
SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany)	32.0%
CDU (German Christian Democratic Party)	25.9%
CSU (Christian-Social Union of Bavaria)	20.1%
FDP (Free Democratic Party)	22.8%
Grüne (Green Party)	38.6%
PDS/Die Linke (The Left)	37.2%
AfD (Alternative for Germany)	15.4%

Source: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/192247/umfrage/frauenanteil-in-den-politischen-parteien/>

In both the UK and German local political systems, candidates are largely proposed by parties (with the exception of independents); those who have the most active histories in the party – for example, holding committee positions and participating in canvassing activity – are more likely to be selected. With men much more likely than women to be members of political parties, this presents a challenge for the talent pool of female candidates.

There are a number of reasons why women may be less likely to join a political party or participate in other ways, such as campaigning. In the UK, being employed and/or being a member of a trade union or other ‘mobilising’ organisation is associated with political participation; both of these are more likely to be true of men (The Electoral Commission 2004). While ethnicity does not make men more or less likely to participate, women in ethnic minority groups are less likely to participate than women in ethnic majority groups (ibid). Women’s lower sense of political efficacy and lower reported interest and trust in politics also affect their likelihood of participation. Conversely, in seats with a woman Member of Parliament, women are more likely to think that government benefits people like them, and are more likely to be interested in campaigning (ibid).

IPPR interviewees in Germany suggested that women may be less likely to be party members because membership dues are relatively high, and routine party meetings and activities are time consuming – while women are still more likely to have household and caring responsibilities as well as typically earning less money. This hypothesis is supported by the gap in participation between men and women in the UK who have children still living at home (The Electoral Commission 2004).

Self-belief to stand and confidence

Labour market participation is often used as a proxy for the position of women within society. The UK ranks 19th of the 28 EU countries and Germany 14th, but both have relatively high gaps between men and

women in average hours worked – suggesting more women work part-time in both countries than the EU average (European Commission 2016).

Areas that have social and economic cultures in which women have autonomy, participate in work and are highly educated, such as urban areas like Berlin, are more likely to have high female representation. Indeed, high local female representation in Germany has been linked to being in an urban area, high female participation in the labour market and support for the left (Sundström and Stockemer 2015). One mechanism for this is likely to be that these women have greater confidence in their own abilities as elected representatives as well as a more realistic knowledge of what skills and abilities are required. An SPD interviewee reported that women are often involved in local community campaigns or projects like running a school café, but do not convert this into standing for elected office, often because they do not see themselves as skilled enough to stand.

Availability

As mentioned, in both the UK and Germany, women are more likely than men to have caring and/or household responsibilities, even alongside work. This means that it is harder for women to invest the hours needed in local parties to be selected, as well as the hours required by the role once in post – including informal activities such as post-meeting drinks, where council business may in fact be set up and decided.

Particularly where the perceived benefit of being a councillor is low, women may decide to prioritise their caring responsibilities over elected office. Perceived benefits may include the impact one can have in the job, or financial compensation. A study focusing on Germany found that women tend to turn down offers to run as candidates for district level offices due to high workloads balanced against insignificant compensation for office holders (Hofer and Wolfgruber 2000). Councillors in Germany are not paid, but get expenses covered and childcare support; the level of compensation varies from council to council. Only politicians at the federal state level and above receive a salary. The impact of this is seen with reduced participation among 30–45-year-old women, who are most likely to have childcare responsibilities (IPPR interviews).

The problem of balancing childcare with political activity is also apparent in England, where 74 per cent of councillors believe the search for balance between domestic and council responsibilities is a key barrier for women accessing and embracing political progression opportunities (Rao 2005). Where women are involved in local politics, they are often older, when caring responsibilities are perhaps less of a concern (Allen 2013).

DEMAND-SIDE BARRIERS: POLITICAL PARTIES AND VOTER PREFERENCES

Political culture

Culture within parties and within councils may disadvantage women in several ways. For example, individuals running women's empowerment programmes in Germany have faced pushback from members who believe men should get equal levels of investment and training – without recognising the multiple structural disadvantages women face that positive action programmes aim to counter. Macho or even sexist

cultures in chambers are also likely to prevent women from staying in politics and progressing.

Potentially, prejudice within the electorate may disadvantage women if voters are less willing to vote for female candidates, though evidence on this is unclear. One interviewee reported that she had found that women experience more prejudice within their parties than outside them; in fact, women are re-elected just as frequently as men and do well in popularity ratings: 'The party view of who's a good candidate differs from the citizens' [view]' (IPPR interview).

More disturbing is the misogynistic abuse received by women politicians in Germany and the UK, which has apparently increased with the adoption of social media and rise in far-right or populist politics. Politicians and journalists in Germany have, for instance, been publicly referred to as 'leftist goody-two-shoes-hippie-sluts', among other misogynistic insults. This reflects not just a lack of respect for women politicians, but a deliberate attempt to threaten them out of the public sphere.

Party processes for recruitment and selection

Unlike in the United States, where candidates for election are selected in primaries, in the UK and Germany, candidates are selected by political parties. At the local level in Germany, local association boards have a high degree of influence on the outcome. Local boards propose candidates, including who represents the local association at party conferences and who stands for office.

Research suggests that where these processes are not formalised, women are likely to be at a disadvantage. This is because it is harder for 'outsiders' to familiarise themselves with how to be nominated and elected, and easier for boards to nominate in their own image (Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Henig and Henig 2001; IPPR interviews). While at higher levels of government, central parties can act as gatekeepers according to established rules in party statutes and norms, at the district level 'old boy networks' can decide who is nominated without those rules being properly enforced (Eder et al 2015). This is likely to be exacerbated by entrenched political cultures where parties have been strong and men active in the parties for a long time, such as the SPD in North Rhine-Westphalia. As well as not selecting women, these informal selection processes may place women in areas where they are unlikely to be elected, or far down candidate lists. Less overt examples of prejudice can include valuing traits that men are more likely to possess – such as public administration experience or voluntary experience in areas deemed most authoritative – over competency and potential (IPPR interview).

That parties are pivotal in determining gender representation, through a range of mechanisms, is clear when we consider the difference in female representatives by party – with the Green Party and Die Linke having many more female elected members than other parties, and areas with strong support for these parties enjoying greater numerical representation of women (see chapter 2).

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS: ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Electoral systems

A substantial body of literature shows that proportional representation tends to lead to greater gender equality than plurality systems in national parliaments, and this can be translated to the local and regional levels (Eder et al 2015). This takes place, for example, because parties are more likely to produce balanced lists to have broad collective appeal, voters are less likely to vote based on personal characteristics, and it is easier to implement quota systems. There are typically more positions up for election in each area (multi-member districts) and there is no one-on-one competition which might see women candidates eliminate others (Eder et al 2015; Lijphart 1986; Katz 1997).

TABLE 3.2

Local council electoral systems by state

State	Electoral system	List type	Number of votes	Threshold
Baden-Württemberg	Proportional representation with open lists	open	= Number of seats being elected	no
Bavaria	Proportional representation with open lists	open	= Number of seats being elected	no
Brandenburg	Proportional representation with open lists	open	3	no
Bremen	Proportional representation with open lists	open	5	partly 5%
Hesse	Proportional representation with open lists	open	= Number of seats being elected	no
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Proportional representation with open lists	open	3	no
Lower Saxony	Proportional representation with open lists	open	3	no
North Rhine-Westphalia	Personalised proportional representation/additional member system	closed	1	2.5%
Rhineland-Palatinate	Proportional representation with open lists	open	= Number of seats being elected	no
Saarland	Proportional representation	closed	1	no
Saxony	Proportional representation with open lists	open	3	no
Saxony-Anhalt	Proportional representation with open lists	open	3	no
Schleswig-Holstein	Personalised proportional representation/additional member system	closed	= Number of direct mandates available	no
Thuringia	Proportional representation with open lists	open	3	no

Source: <http://www.wahlrecht.de/kommunal/index.htm>

However, specific features of the proportional representation system, or instances where plurality voting is used in Germany, may act as a barrier to women entering politics. Local government in Germany has a range of electoral systems. Some districts have ordered lists; others allow voters to express preferences among members of the list, and others still allow voters to allocate more than one vote to each candidate until all votes are used. Some areas have constituency systems, closer to the UK. The differences reflect variations in gender representation. For example, the state parliament

(Landtag) in Baden-Württemberg – which has a constituency system – has low representation of women, whereas Berlin – which has a list system – has high levels of gender representation (Schlote 2013). The relative merits of each are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

The type of voting system will also interact with the size of the district and effective thresholds for electoral success in determining the relative numbers of men and women in a council. Multi-member districts are likely to lead to greater diversity than single-member districts because the degree of one-on-one competition is much lower, which means in seats where women are up against other women it will not necessarily reduce the overall (numerical) representation of women.

Type of position available

Finally, the type of elected position available may be intrinsically linked to whether the position is open to women. Mayoral positions appear to be particularly difficult for women to attain in Germany, with just 10 per cent of mayors being women (Kletzing 2016a). This may be because of a perception within parties and among voters that positions with a high degree of concentrated responsibility require candidates with typically masculine traits, such as strength of will and authority, or it may be that increased competition for these roles, as in the case of first-past-the-post systems, makes them harder to reach or less desirable for women.

4.

INITIATIVES AND POLICIES IN GERMANY

A number of initiatives and policies in Germany potentially offer interesting lessons for the UK as it seeks to improve gender representation in local and regional politics. These approximately map onto the barriers laid out so far.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES TO ADDRESS SUPPLY-SIDE BARRIERS

Helene Weber Kolleg, EAF Berlin

Helene Weber Kolleg (HWK) is an initiative aiming to get more women into local politics by creating a network of support, and providing coaching and mentoring. HWK was set up in 2011, following several activities funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and carried out by the European Academy for Women in Politics and Business (EAF Berlin): the Frauen Macht Kommune (Women Power Municipality) campaign in 2008; a representative study on female local politicians, and the first Helene Weber Preis (Helene Weber Prize) for female local politicians in 2009.

The initiative supports both women who are interested in entering local politics and those who are already in municipal government and would like to progress. The initiative is cross-party; over half of participants are members of the CDU.

The main activities of the Helene Weber Kolleg are:

- The Helene Weber Prize, which prestigiously recognises outstanding female local politicians in unremunerated posts. Candidates are nominated by the Bundestag and selected for the award by a jury chaired by the Federal Ministry. The award encourages these women to continue in politics by recognising their achievements. Recipients receive coaching and access to networking activities among the Helene Weber Prize-winners. The award also encourages the recipients to act as role models for others.

The award-winners receive a budget for local initiatives which encourage and support women interested in local politics.

- Several mentoring programmes focused on increasing motivation, knowledge and capacity of participants who are not yet elected but are informally involved. Mentors are successfully elected local politicians, among them the recipients of the Helene Weber Prize. By 2015, the mentoring programme had supported 65 mentoring pairs. Mentoring includes shadowing, and seminars on topics such as assertiveness and micropolitics.

- A variety of other activities, including international exchanges, conferences, a website with information for women looking to enter politics, and a travelling exhibition on the ‘Mothers of German Basic Law’, who enshrined the equality of women, to raise awareness and debate on the topic of women in politics.

One of the main benefits of the programme is that it helps women to build networks with more established female politicians, and across parties. ‘For the women it’s a very good experience to be with women from other parties – they learn it’s the same in every party’ (IPPR interview with Uta Kletzing). It therefore relies on the active support of the community of women who have received the award as well as politicians and other actors who want to encourage more women into politics.

SPD Academy (SPD-Parteischule im Willy-Brandt-Haus)

The SPD Academy is an internal party organisation that runs training programmes for both men and women looking to stand for office within the SPD, and those wishing to progress within the party.

Its ‘municipal academy’ programme, founded in 2001, is targeted at 20–40-year-olds who already have some kind of elected mandate, has had 42 per cent female participants despite women making up only 29 per cent of eligible candidates. 1,700 people have participated.

The ‘leadership academy of social democracy’ programme, founded in 2007, is the advanced leadership training programme for elected politicians. Around half of participants, of which there have been 280 in total, have successfully progressed into higher levels of politics.

The youth section of the party, Jusos, runs training programmes targeted at young people, including young women, on soft skills, local government and communication.

Since 2010, the Academy has also run programmes specifically targeted at women, aiming to ‘help women find their own way through the party, rather than being patronising’ (IPPR interview with Klaus Tovar and Dennis Eighteen).

- **Women to Power:** this programme is aimed at women who are already involved in local politics in some way, perhaps in a local activist or unremunerated position, who’d like to do more. The programme is competitive (around 50 per cent of applicants are selected) and selection is based on written application. Participants attend two three-day seminars, with female facilitators of the sessions coming from a range of backgrounds so that participants can easily relate to at least one. Topics of the seminars include analysis of gender and politics as well as participants’ own skillsets, such as leadership and argumentation. It has had 150 participants.
- **Women in Power:** this programme is aimed at women hoping to progress within politics, and began in 2016. The programme includes coaching for women already in office, such as councillors and mayors, and mentoring to develop women’s networks to match men’s. Ten women have participated so far.

The SPD Academy has been working continuously since 2000. All programmes have been very highly rated by participants, and reached candidates from all areas of Germany; each of them are being constantly evaluated.

CHANGING PARTY STRUCTURES AND RULES TO OVERCOME DEMAND-SIDE BARRIERS

Gender quotas within parties

The Green Party was the first party to use gender quotas in Germany, in the 80s, with a requirement of 50 per cent of electoral list places going to women, and the top slot reserved for a woman (Davidson-Schmich 2008). The SPD and Die Linke adopted gender quotas shortly after. This is reflected in much higher and improving rates of female participation in these parties than others; as high as 40.1 per cent of Green Party municipal councillors (see chapter 2; Holtkamp and Schnittke 2008). Parties on the right have weaker gender quotas, such as the CDU's 33 per cent 'women's quorum' on electoral lists. They must be followed unless enough qualified candidates aren't found, leaving substantial room for interpretation (ibid). The FDP is the only party with no kind of gender quota, and has a correspondingly low proportion of municipal elected members who are women, at 18.1 per cent in 2007 (Holtkamp and Schnittke 2008).

The voluntary party quotas differ quite substantially; they range from no quotas to 50 per cent quotas, from concrete regulations for party lists with a 'zipper' system, with alternating male and female candidates, to quotas for unelected inner-party offices only. For example, the Green Party requires male and female co-chairs, the SPD requires one of the top two posts going to a woman, and the CDU requires one of the top three posts going to a woman, provided a suitable female candidate can be found. As well as directly increasing the number of women, quotas should act to 'open the door to cultural change' within parties, as having more women in positions of power becomes normalised and male dominance denormalised (IPPR interview with Uta Kletzing).

Current gender quotas are voluntary promises, and enforcement varies. In particular, whether a woman could be found in a concerted search is not entirely objective; it depends on how thorough the search is, and it seems unfeasible that no amount of effort could find a suitable candidate from the 50 per cent of the population that are women. Yet in practice, there's an implicit rule of 'if you kind of tried, and no one complained that you couldn't find a woman, it's fine' (IPPR interview). Hamburg and Bremen are among the states where quotas are consistently implemented, while southern states such as Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria have the lowest rates of quota implementation (Davidson-Schmich 2008). Implementation of quotas is also generally weaker at the local level, where the central party has less control over who is selected and how (Davidson-Schmich 2006).

Quotas are not without problems. The central argument of parties that haven't adopted them is that they are undemocratic and bureaucratic. However, the counter argument is that gender inequality is worse for democracy than the imposition of quotas. It is also difficult to determine the exact impact of party quotas, as they are simultaneously a driver and a reflection of party cultures (IPPR interview with Sabine Drewes).

Also, the design of quotas and the electoral system matters; if using a zipper system, the first candidate should be female to ensure greater representation of women.

With voluntary gender quotas established as a normal and useful feature of politics, women's campaign groups in Germany are turning their attention to achieving a 'parity law', as there is, for example, in France. This would require all parties to have equal numbers of men and women on party lists. Different actions for a parity law have been initiated in nine out of 16 German states since 2007, with campaigners currently waiting for the outcome of a lawsuit in Bavaria. Opponents argue that this would 'interfere with the freedom of political parties and political elections' provided by the Basic Law, and that the same aims can be achieved with empowerment programmes (Kletzing 2016a). However, the evidence suggests that legal quota provisions do indeed accelerate progress to gender equality and correspond with the gender equality provision of the Basic Law.

In the EU as a whole, the share of women in the 27 national parliaments (single/lower house) increased by an average of five percentage points between 2003 and 2013, but this average is just 2.3 percentage points for countries with no form of quota legislation, not much higher (3.5 percentage points) for countries with only voluntary party quotas, but significantly higher (10.3 percentage points) in countries where a legislative quota has applied for at least one election. Indeed, where legislative quotas have been removed – as in former East Germany (GDR) – gender representation has worsened (European Commission 2013).

SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Proportional representation and larger districts

One of the key differences both between the UK and Germany, and within Germany, is the electoral system. German electoral systems for local government vary by state, as described in chapter 3. Some electoral system design acts as a barrier to gender representation, such as where councillors are elected in single-member districts by plurality. This generally results in fewer women winning elections. In the worst cases, multiple parties may field their female candidates in the same seats as a competitive response, meaning that only one woman from those constituencies can be elected (IPPR interview). However, the natural experiment of the German federal system is helpful in revealing where particular electoral system designs can act as catalysts for greater gender representation. For example, multi-member districts, larger districts and closed list proportional representation systems in general have higher rates of gender representation. Open lists may disadvantage women by allowing more scope for voters' preferences for men over women to affect the result, although, as described in chapter 3, whether voters are prejudiced against women is contested.

Institutional support for gender equality

The German national government has demonstrated its efforts to prioritise gender equality in both policy-making and local representation. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth publishes an 'atlas' of gender representation in politics and the economy, for example, and makes sustained efforts to push gender equality and gender mainstreaming. European Union policy-making also has a 'strong

influence on the institutionalisation of gender-equality policies in Germany, and EU initiatives on gender mainstreaming have stimulated debate about respective instruments and institutional mechanisms' (EIGE 2016). Around 50 local and regional government organisations have signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, including a pledge to ensure the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making.

Gender equality is also increasingly becoming institutionalised at the regional level. A department or unit for gender equality now exists in almost all states. State ministers with responsibility for gender equality and women's affairs have met at a conference together with national government representatives annually since 1991. Gender mainstreaming, budgeting and strategy is rising up the agenda, although it is not consistently happening yet across states or below the state level.

5.

INITIATIVES AND POLICIES IN THE UK

Initiatives in the UK have tended to either focus on increasing the involvement of women in national politics, or have not exclusively focused on women. For example, the Local Government Association (LGA) has a website with plentiful information on entering local politics, but this is targeted at both men and women. However, there are similar programmes and initiatives to those available in Germany. The following provides a brief overview of some interesting examples of these.

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

The Parliament Project

The Parliament Project was launched in 2016 to encourage women into and support women in all levels of politics. The project runs information events and training with existing politicians and experts, promotes research into gender and politics, and will soon offer a peer networking service. The Parliament Project also distributes postcards which people can use to encourage women to stand for elected office, at the national, regional or local level. Recipients of the postcards can then sign up to receive information about events and training.

Stand Up and Be Counted: Be A Councillor

Stand Up and Be Counted: Be A Councillor is a leaflet produced by the Fabian Women's Network to encourage women to stand to be councillors, predominantly for the Labour Party, with which the Fabian Society is associated. The leaflet aims to tackle the issue that far more men enquire about and are interested in standing to be a councillor.

The leaflet contains the stories and voices of real female councillors around the country, along with guidance relating to how to stand, the nature of being a councillor and tips for getting selected.

CHANGING PARTY STRUCTURES

All-women shortlists and quotas in the Labour Party

While not a local intervention, since 1997 Labour has used all-women shortlists for UK general elections, requiring that at least half of all 'winnable' Labour seats are only open to women candidates. There were 38 in 1997 and as many as 77 in 2015. This has helped Labour to pull ahead of other parties in terms of the number of female candidates in target seats (54 per cent compared to 36 per cent for the Scottish National Party, 35 per cent for the Liberal Democrats, 28 per cent for the Conservatives and 20 per cent for Ukip) (Campbell and Childs 2015). This has not necessarily converted to a successful increase in the number of female MPs overall, however, beyond the initial increase in 1997 following the introduction of

all-women shortlists. Thirty-five women from all-women shortlists were successfully elected in 1997 and 31 in 2015, while the absolute number of women Labour MPs in parliament has actually remained relatively stable at between 80 and 100 (Kelly and White 2016). This is likely to be because of the ailing electoral fortunes of the Labour Party, but also because ‘winnable seats’ vary in the extent to which they are winnable, and the most favourable seats may still be going to male candidates. Target seats are also harder to achieve electoral success in than safe seats, so without reselection processes, even all-women shortlists will only change the status quo slowly.

The Labour Party has also sought to increase women’s representation in local government through centralised rules. In winnable, multi-member wards in all-out contests, at least one candidate must be a woman (an initial ballot using an all-women shortlist, followed by an all-candidate shortlist). In councils electing one-third or half of seats and all winnable wards where a sitting councillor is retiring, at least one other councillor or candidate must be a woman. Where more women are retiring than men, current proportions must be maintained (Labour Party 2016). However, IPPR analysis of London alone finds seven councils where there is at least one all-Labour all-male ward, suggesting the policy is not always implemented, or incumbency means opportunities to use it have not always arisen.

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

As discussed in previous chapters, the design of electoral systems can advantage or disadvantage women. England operates three types of electoral system across local elections, elected mayors and the London Assembly, with differing degrees of proportionality.

TABLE 5.1

Electoral systems in operation for English elections

Legislative institution	Electoral system	Vote
England local elections	First-past-the-post	One vote, vote for candidate, most votes wins.
Directly elected mayors (England and Wales, including London)	Supplementary vote	First and second preference vote for candidate, most votes wins through process of first preference elimination, and second preference redistribution.
London Assembly	Additional member system	Constituency/ward candidate elected through first-past-the-post, with closed party list top-up through proportional representation.

While the London Assembly performs better than local councils in its gender balance, suggestive of first-past-the-post’s weaknesses, as the Fawcett Society (2012) has argued, electoral reform should not be viewed as a panacea. Figures from the UK show that in local government, female representation among councillors is actually higher in England than in Scotland and Northern Ireland, which use the single transferable vote – characterised by both multi-member constituencies and more proportionality.

6. CONCLUSION AND AREAS FOR EXPLORATION

*'We've done a lot on improving women, but not politics.
That's the paradigm we're in now'*

IPPR interview with German interviewee

Neither the UK nor Germany are currently performing well on gender representation in local and regional government, and both countries have seen their performance in this area stall over the last 20 years. Yet this is not to say that either cannot learn lessons from the other. Shared experiences confirm analyses of why women are not yet fully represented in both countries, and key differences demonstrated by the variety of electoral systems, cultures and party configurations between and within the UK and Germany can shed light on what works and what doesn't.

Clear from this analysis is that parties are the gatekeepers of power in both the UK and Germany; their structures, selection procedures, programmes and cultures are key in determining and improving gender representation. '[As parties we] have to make sure we know it's our responsibility to change' (IPPR interview). Also clear is that while policies such as quotas can accelerate progress towards equal gender representation, they alone are not enough to reach full gender equality numerically and qualitatively. Both interventions that seek to broaden the pool of candidates and support them in their political journey, as well as interventions that seek to break down prejudiced structures and cultures, are necessary to achieve this. This is demonstrated by the Green Party in Germany having achieved near equal gender representation numerically, but still struggling to rid the party culture of all sexism and prejudice that means men remain dominant (Müller 2017). No major party in the UK or Germany has 'fixed' the problem of numerical and qualitative inequality between men and women.

Given the interest in Germany regarding a parity law mandating that all lists should have equal representation, German political parties may wish to explore voluntary all-women shortlists at local and regional levels in some cases. The experience of the UK shows that while this can make sizeable changes, it must be implemented by parties with strong electoral support and ideally in the most winnable or safe seats for change to happen quickly.

The UK has a limited record of 'improving women' through programmes such as The Parliament Project (therefore using the empowerment model) as well as politics, with interventions such as the Labour Party's local government quotas (structural reform). But in many ways it has not done either radically enough. The record of areas in Germany with proportional representation and multi-member districts combined with cultural empowerment of women can serve as a useful lesson as to where UK

campaigners should focus next. We believe the following are key areas that UK campaigners and parties should explore:

Better data collection and comparison between areas

Neither the UK nor Germany has mandatory reporting of gender representation at all levels. Having this would draw attention to the lack of representation of women at these levels, and focus activity in this space by parties. Rankings (as conducted by the Heinrich Böll Foundation of representation in German cities) can help create competition between areas and parties to demonstrate that they reflect and represent the electorate in a low-cost way. Rankings also make it easier to identify ‘what works’ by comparing the different characteristics and activities of more representative and less representative areas.

Greater use of quotas

The introduction of quotas by German parties in the 80s led to a large shift in female representation which has not been replicated with the use of empowerment programmes in later years. While the Labour Party in the UK uses a form of quotas, and correspondingly has a higher number of female councillors than other parties, other parties have weak gender requirements and are lagging behind. Greater use of quotas could dramatically accelerate the representation of women at the local level.

The effectiveness of quotas depends on the design of the system; quotas interact with the electoral system, size of constituency and assembly, and whether each constituency is single-member or multi-member. All parties, including Labour, should review their own quota rules and seek to improve and enforce how they are implemented.

Institutionalised support for gender representation in local politics

The German national government has demonstrated greater efforts than the UK government to prioritise gender equality in both policy-making and local representation. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth publishes an ‘atlas’ of gender representation in politics and the economy, for example, and makes sustained efforts to push gender equality and gender mainstreaming in line with EU policy and initiatives. Around 50 local and regional government organisations have signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, including a pledge to ensure the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making, but only Oxfordshire Council, Bristol Council and the Scottish Parliament have done the same in the UK. Especially given the UK’s departure from the European Union, there is a risk the UK will fall behind other European countries in institutional support for gender equality in local decision-making.

Cross-party networks and comprehensive empowerment programmes

The UK has some programmes to encourage women into and support women in local politics, but they are either in the fledgling stage, or are not as comprehensive, open to all political denominations or institutionalised as the German equivalents. While the German programmes have not yet been fully evaluated, UK groups should observe how and whether they do have an impact and transfer learning to improve their own programmes. Also clear from the analysis of programmes in Germany is that both

interventions that seek to broaden the pool of candidates and support them in their political journey, as well as interventions that seek to break down prejudiced structures and cultures, are necessary to achieve this. Empowerment programmes are also complementary to structural reform, rather than a sufficient alternative, if equal representation of men and women is to be achieved.

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