

# Politization and Impartiality in Public Administration: Gender Parity in public administration in Central and Eastern Europe

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**Abstract:** In spite of the progress towards gender equality in many societies around the world in the past decades, gender parity in public administration is still lagging behind, women being underrepresented in the upper tiers of civil service (glass ceiling), as well as in particular public organizations (glass walls). Administrative culture may boost or impede gender parity by promoting organizational practices rooted in specific values, Weberian bureaucracy boosting gender inequality in public organizations due to its focus on hierarchy and strict separation of public and private sphere, reinforcing the status differences among men and women in public service. An additional dimension that impacts gender parity in public administration deals with impartiality versus politization, opposing the idea of distinct normativity operating in private and professional life of the public servants to the prevalence of political interest over the general interest. One of the core elements of the dimension impartiality - politization impacting gender parity deals with staff recruitment, the system based on merit providing better chance to achieve gender parity in public sector, while politization reinforces traditional gender roles, leading to the reproduction of gender disparity from politics to public administration. Thus, low political representation of women leads to low gender parity in public administration in case of high politization. The countries from Central and Eastern Europe have been confronted with significant drop in female political representation since the end of the communist quota system, while corruption and politization put their imprint on their public administration. This paper looks at the connection between impartiality vs. politization and gender parity in public administration in post-communist countries and compares them with the long-established democracies from Western Europe, scoring high on the quality of government.

This paper focuses on how impartiality as opposed to politization contributes to the promotion of gender parity in public administration, employing a cross-national comparative approach and combining administrative data, provided by the Gen-PaCS Project that compiles data from 158 countries and territories on gender equality in public administration over the time span 1951 – 2020, with expert survey data coming from Quality of Government Expert Survey wave III, collected in 2020 from a pool of more than 550 experts, providing expert assessment about the organizational design of public administration from 157 countries. Merging the two datasets allows to analyse the cross-national variation of the gender parity in public administration depending on the bureaucratic structure (defined as security of tenure, and closeness) and bureaucratic behaviour (understood as politization versus impartiality). The analysis relies on sub-samples of the two data sets, allowing to compare between CEE countries and the ones in Western Europe. The paper employs OLS regression models to control for the effect of economic development and gender culture and proves that impartiality and bureaucratic structure have significant influence on gender parity in public administration.