



LIBERAL
INTERNATIONAL

GENDER EQUALITY REPORT

FINDINGS OF THE 2021
WOMEN IN POLITICAL
PARTIES INDEX



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.
European Dialogue

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. President's Greeting	2
II. Introduction	3
III. What Is The Women In Political Parties Index (WIPPI)?	4
IV. Why Is Inclusivity And Diversity In Political Parties Important?	5
V. Methodology	6
• Collection of the 2021 Results	6
VI. Results Of The 2021 Women In Political Parties Index	7
• A. Parliamentary Representation	7
• B. Parliamentary Activities	9
• C. Codes of Conduct	10
• D. Education	11
VII. Handbook Of Best Practice On Gender Based Political Party Inclusivity	12
Annex	13

I. PRESIDENT'S GREETING

Dear Liberal Colleagues and Friends,

I am very proud to present the second edition of Liberal International's Gender Equality Report.

Empowering women and ensuring equal opportunities for all is a question of fundamental rights and a requisite for a society to be truly democratic. It is also necessary for the building of prosperous and enduring societies. This cannot be achieved if half of the population is left behind.

As world leaders face the enormous challenge of weathering simultaneous crises of climate change, inequality, democratic backsliding, and a growing disregard of the international rules-based order, female leadership and diversity is needed more than ever. Meaningful gender inclusivity in political parties results in policies that better represent the needs of women and the economically disadvantaged, and champions stronger public services and infrastructure to offer greater support and vibrance to liberal societies.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has applied increased pressure on the vulnerable and exacerbated existing inequalities. The economic and social lockdown has severely impacted gender equality, contributing to increased rates of domestic violence against women and the shut-down of public services which fulfilled the function of traditionally gendered labour including childcare and health care. Women are also over-represented in the economic sectors hit hardest by the pandemic and more vulnerable to existing stresses on income.

As the world begins to shake off the shackles of pandemic restrictions and reflects on what has been lost and how to plan for a better tomorrow, these impacts need to be considered: we cannot let the pandemic further entrench gender inequalities.

Women's political participation remains a key priority for the Liberal International Human Rights Committee. The WIPP-Index, which serves as a concrete tool to assist members in identifying where they can improve their own diversity, was developed last year, and resulted in the publication of LI's first Gender Equality Report.

This year we are happy to announce that participation went up with 80 per cent. We hope that the Index's reach continues to expand and that Liberal International and our member parties find ourselves empowered to progress women's empowerment and create meaningfully inclusive political spaces.

Warmest regards,



Dr Hakima el Haité
President of Liberal International



II. INTRODUCTION

It is a privilege to introduce this report on the results of the second annual WIPP Index survey.

Progress on issues related to women empowerment has been a real flagship for Liberal International. The development of the WIPP Index has opened the door to many engaging discussions and it has inspired numerous initiatives regarding training and mentoring on many continents in our community. Above all, we are deeply encouraged by the response and look forward to seeing how member parties will use it to track their progress and shape their next steps in the inclusion of women.

This year's report notes good progress made in many areas by the member parties. It is difficult to compare last year's results with the current reported metrics, but that is only because there was an outstanding 80% uptake of questionnaire responses. Nonetheless, some of the reported results are still very encouraging. The increased uptake is to be saluted and we are grateful to all of you who filled in the survey.

The simple fact that one-third of our member parties currently have a woman leader this year does say something about change. It marks a huge progression compared with last year, when we had only a few women leaders.

I also note that the impression of the influence of possible women's wings has improved. A third of respondents said that their women's wing was highly influential, and virtually none said that the women's wing did not have any influence at all.

There is one finding that worries me: most parties have Codes of Conduct in place for ethical behaviour, but as the report notes, there are less robust findings on avenues to report and discipline perpetrators for harassment.

I am saddened by this fact. One would have thought that after the revelations brought to light by the "me too" movement of misogynistic behaviour by those in positions of power, more effective reporting mechanisms would have been introduced. I encourage all of us to use those parties that are most progressive in this field as a benchmark. I do believe we need to address these issues together in one form or another.

Last year, we noted that the combination of misogyny and authoritarianism is a lethal one for liberal democracy and for our parties. The anti-feminist movement presents a well-organised threat to the advancement of women's leadership and to women's safety everywhere. This movement risks undoing much of the progress made during the last 50 - 60 years as we can see in the USA, Africa and Europe.

At celebrations on the centennial of voting rights for women in Sweden and at another jubilee in Finland, my liberal friends Cecilia Malmström and Eva Biaudet voiced the idea for the need of a new "Beijing" conference on the rights of women. I challenge liberal ministers to develop this idea.

The issue nexus of climate change and women is also an important priority for us. To address it, liberal parties should ensure that girls and women have equal rights to inheritance of land and capital.

In short: there remains a lot to do! We hope many more from the liberal family will join us next year as we continue the fight for women's political inclusion.

Finally, I would like to thank the fantastic people in our secretariat who enabled this report: Mikaela Hellman who with such energy worked with these issues and online meetings related to the report; Jason Frazer, who after Mikaela's departure adopted the WIPPI and ensured the large uptake and Irene Wang who has written this report and I want to thank her for all the hard work related to it.



Astrid Thors
Chair of the Liberal International Human Rights Committee



III. WHAT IS THE WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES INDEX (WIPPI)?

For many years, Liberal International (LI) has dedicated itself to the mission of advocating for women in politics. In 2019, LI launched its Women in Political Parties Index (WIPPI). With this, the global federation takes the next step: empowering member parties to deliver real change.

This tool gives all LI member parties the opportunity to measure the level of diversity and inclusivity within their party. The parties will then, with the help of the Inclusivity Handbook, have a chance to boost the inclusivity and diversity within their party structures through dedicated training sessions. The aim of LI in launching this index is to help LI members identify where the challenges and opportunities lie within their political parties when it comes to welcoming more women into their ranks.

Initiating this work in early 2019, LI gathered representatives from its global membership at two expert forums, one at the fringes of the Africa Liberal Network General Assembly in Marrakech, Morocco, and one hosted by LI Vice President Abir al Sahlani and Centerpartiet in Stockholm, Sweden.

At the 202nd Executive Committee in London, UK, LI consultant Tamara Dancheva who presented the index survey to the membership. Norwegian Minister for Equality Trine Skei Grande (Venstre, Norway) and Northern Irish Minister of Justice Naomi Long (Alliance Party, UK) delivered inspirational keynote speeches on their experiences of being treated differently as women in politics and the crucial importance of addressing this issue for women all over the world.

During the autumn of 2019, the WIPP Index was tested by six LI member parties who gave the Secretariat feedback on the product. The parties testing the index are from Europe, Asia, and Africa. The testing parties D66 (Netherlands), Democratic Alliance (South Africa), and Centerpartiet (Sweden) also shared their feedback with the secretariat and the LI membership in a panel discussion at the 203rd Executive Committee in Fès, Morocco, in November 2019.

The survey was opened to the LI membership for the second time in March 2021, and all eligible parties were able to submit their results until June 2021. The result of this data collection is presented in this report.

In providing these results, Liberal International's objective is to assist our member parties in promoting greater participation of women in politics, which research shows benefits political parties, countries, and governments.



IV. WHY IS INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN POLITICAL PARTIES IMPORTANT?

The meaningful inclusion of marginalised groups and women in political parties marks a departure from traditional, patriarchal power norms that underpin leadership styles and power hierarchies within organisational structures. It strengthens the legitimacy of representative democratic governments.

Quotas, reserved seats for female candidates, women's wings, and diversity boards within political parties' structures will only be meaningful if they allow women within party ranks to wield power and influence. It is therefore imperative to look beyond the numbers and ask: how can we change society – as well as political cultures and organisations – so that diverse leadership becomes the norm rather than the exception?

While gender equality and diversity in politics holds symbolic importance, it also plays a critical role in developing a political culture and reality that is more consistent with liberal values and human rights obligations. Research indicates that gender has a distinct influence on policy priorities; where there is a deficit of female representation in political parties, there is a deficit in democratic policy representation. There is strong evidence that when more women are elected to office, there is a corollary increase in policy making that emphasises quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities.

At the same time, political parties can have increased electoral success when they become truly representative of their social environment. For example, in the September 2018 parliamentary elections in Sweden, 60 per cent of Centerpartiet's new voter base were women because the party ran on a feminist green agenda. In Malaysia, the People's Justice Party secured the election of its co-founder, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, as the first female Deputy Prime Minister in the country's history, while in Kenya, under the leadership of the Orange Democratic Movement, the Africa Liberal Network (ALN) adopted its ground-breaking Nairobi Declaration committing ALN member parties to work towards the full elimination and prevention of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

V. METHODOLOGY

The main goal of Liberal International's Women in Political Parties Index (LI WIPP Index) is to provide an evaluation tool for (liberal) political parties across the globe to evaluate gender-based political party inclusivity. This Index can be used to benchmark the current state of the party and to assess existing challenges and galvanise change in internal party structures and policies to make the political party in question an inclusive place for members representing all groups within a society.

The Index uses a self-assessment survey that evaluates the state of inclusiveness in a political party. The survey covers a range of topics that are important for the work of every political party: parliamentary representation and parliamentary activities, intraparty decision-making mechanisms, codes of conduct for party members or officials, and intraparty training activities.

This report presents the results of the 2021 Women in Political Parties survey. Since electoral systems differ across the globe and can influence the way parties enter parliament and work within it, it accounts for those differences in electoral systems and in levels of parliamentary representation.

Collection of the 2021 Results

The second annual LI WIPP Index was open to all LI member parties between March and June 2021. Each party eligible to participate received an access code for the survey. For each party, three different party representatives have filled in the survey individually to ensure accuracy in reporting.

Although no data on specific countries or parties will be revealed in this report to ensure that individual parties' results cannot be traced, the responding parties are active in countries from four different continents.

The Index survey is structured according to parliamentary electoral system with slightly different questions being asked depending on the type of electoral system within which the party operates. The survey covers four different options: proportional, majoritarian, mixed, and no parliamentary representation (regardless of the electoral system). All four electoral categories are represented among the responding parties in the 2021 WIPP Index.

See Annex I for the methodology of the WIPPI survey.

VI. RESULTS OF THE 2021 WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES INDEX

This section presents the findings of the 2021 WIPP Index. Parties this year scored an average WIPPI score of 61.3%, compared to 40.6% last year. More detailed results are presented by category: Parliamentary Representation, Parliamentary Activities, Codes of Conduct, and Education.

Please note that the results of individual parties are kept strictly confidential. They are therefore presented at a generalised level with variations primarily being presented according to the electoral system.

This year, the response rate for WIPPI was 44.6%. There was an 80% uptake in responses from last year. Given the significant increase in responses this year, with many parties submitting to the WIPP Index for the first time and reporting biases that will be controlled in next year's data collection, changes in reported scores cannot be interpreted as definitive evidence of a trend.

Most of the responses came from parties in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

A. Parliamentary Representation

The questions concerning parliamentary representation scrutinise female participation within the party's parliamentary representation. This section asks parties how many of their Members of Parliament (MPs) are women, and how many of these women have seats on important parliamentary bodies.

For parties who do not have parliamentary representation, this section of the survey asks how many of their candidates in the most recent election were female.

In general, this is the section of the survey where the responding parties had the strongest improvement out of the five sub-indices of the survey with an average result of 46.3%, up from 37.2% the previous year. However, this figure also reflects the volume of new first-time responders.

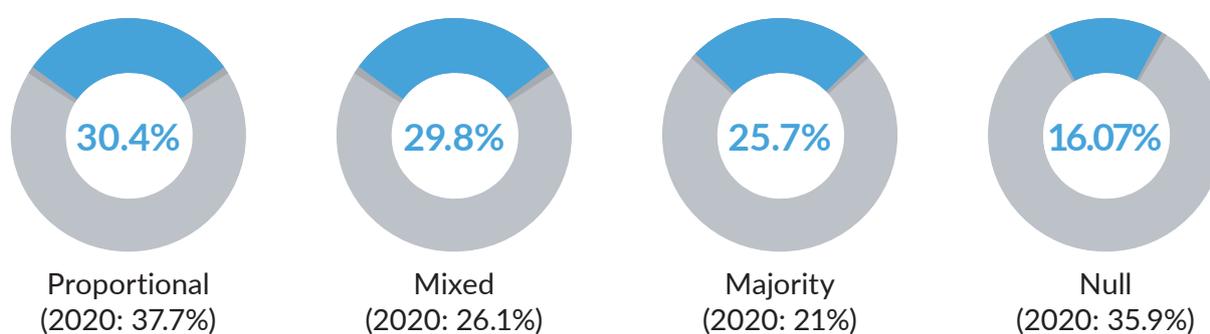
Percentage of female MPs

The percentage of female MPs in a country is an often-used statistic to show the (lack of) political representation of women. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), women represent 50% or more of parliamentarians in only four countries in the world: Mexico, Rwanda, Cuba, and the United Arab Emirates. The latter three are classified as authoritarian regimes by the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index.

For LI member parties participating in this survey collection, there is a wide range of female parliamentary representation. The party with the highest share of female MPs had 64% women in their parliamentary group, while the party with the lowest representation had no female MPs.

The average percentage of female MPs for the responding parties of the WIPP 2021 was 28%. This is slightly higher than the global average for female MPs in parliaments, which the IPU estimated in May 2021 to be 25.5%. This shows that the liberal family is performing better than the global average. Six of the responding parties reported a share of female MPs which was 50% or higher. Only two parties reported a majority share of female MPs in 2021.

Within these results, clear differences can be identified between the parliamentary systems. The highest average number of female MPs by parliamentary election system was found among the parties operating in proportional electoral systems, where the average was 30.4%, followed closely by mixed electoral systems with an average of 29.8%. Most of these parties are active in European countries.



The lowest average result was found among parties operating in countries with majoritarian systems, where only 25.7% of MPs on average were female. Most of these parties are active in Africa and Asia.

The IPU reports that in Asia, the average percentage of women in parliament is 20.4%; 24.9% in Sub-Saharan Africa; and 17.8% in the MENA region. For parties operating in countries with mixed parliamentary systems, the average was slightly higher at 26.1% female MPs. These countries were mostly located in Africa and Asia, showing an above average representation.

Parties reported an average of 33.4% of seats on parliamentary bodies such as boards, caucuses, and groups were allocated to female MPs. Of the types of bodies that female MPs were appointed to, 3.7% of parties reported female appointments were primarily in bodies concerned with “hard topics” (internal affairs and police, military and secret service, public finance and economy), 33.3% with “soft topics” (education, culture, social protection and care, family planning), and 63% reported an equal division of appointments to bodies concerned with “hard” and “soft” topics.

Finally, responding parties without parliamentary representation were instead asked how many per cent of their parliamentary candidates were female in the most recent election. These parties reported a low average of 16.07%. This does not give data on whether these female candidates were selected for winnable seats or were placed high on the party’s list. The parties without parliamentary representation operate in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America.

B. Parliamentary Activities

This section digs deeper into the issue of representation within parliaments. It deals with how many of a party's laws and/or motions and amendments were presented by female MPs. Like the previous section, it excludes responding parties without parliamentary representation, since they naturally do not perform such parliamentary activities.

The average for the WIPPI 2021 in this section was 40.4%, down from 42.7% last year. Last year, this was the category where parties reported it most difficult to answer the questions correctly due to lack of records. Most parliaments do not record data of how many motions and amendments are presented by a party's MPs during each year and whether they were presented by male or female MPs. Most parties do not keep such data on their MPs either.

This year, this also remained the section where individual respondents from the same party differed most in their replies. Even though all parties replied, the inconsistencies between the individual respondents are significant enough to make the results largely meaningless.

From this section, we can conclude that while many political parties do keep records of female representation and activity within the party bodies, such data is not recorded for parliamentary activities.

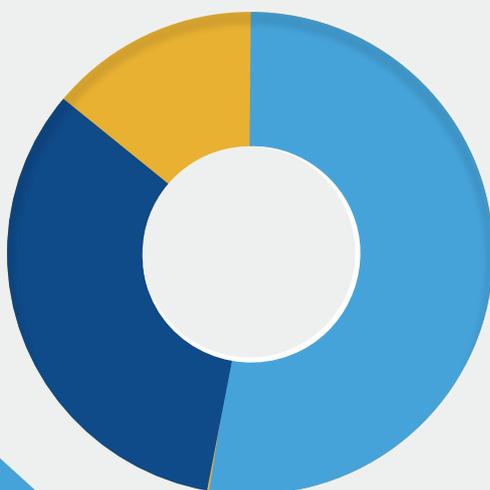
Intraparty Mechanisms

Respondents were asked how the party leadership is elected, whether mechanisms such as quotas are used for the party management, and whether the party has a women's wing. All responding parties were included in this section, where the average across the liberal family was found to be 46.5%, virtually unchanged from 46.4% last year.

Female Leadership

In addition to the number of female MPs, female party leadership can indicate the relevance and inclusion of women in a political party. Female party leadership gives women, and young women in particular, a role model to aspire to. It demonstrates that women possess key qualities that are essential for successful leadership in politics and is a catalyst for broader acceptance and empowerment of female politicians in leadership positions.

For the parties in this survey, nearly half of the responding parties (47.2%) have at some point in their party's history had at least one female leader. The percentage of responding parties that currently have a female leader has grown significantly to 33.3% this year from 22% last year.



52.8%

of responding parties have never had a female leader. (2020: 56%)

33.3%

currently have a female leader.

13.9%

have had a female leader in the past.

66.7% of the liberal parties participating in the 2021 WIPP Index currently have a male leader, and 52.8% of these parties have never had a female leader in their party's history (the length of which varies greatly between young and old parties).

While 56.3% of responding parties in proportional systems and 50% of parties in mixed representation systems reported having a history of female leadership, only one fifth of responding parties operating under majority electoral systems reported the same.

79.5% of parties reported having a women's wing. Of those parties with women's wings, 63.3% reported their women's wings were "not so influential," meaning they are consulted on party decisions only sometimes and their influence is relatively effective. 33.3% reported having "very influential" women's wings that are consulted on most party decisions and exert strong informal and/or formal influence, while 3.3% reported their women's wing as having no influence at all.

C. Codes of Conduct

Another important step in enforcing different non-discrimination strategies is the implementation of a formal code of conduct within the party's guiding documents. Codes of conduct can explicitly prohibit sexist behaviour and speech, outline how party officials and/or members should behave at party events, protect women from attacks and unequal candidate nomination procedures during elections, and specify how instances of discriminatory behaviour are to be handled within party. They are a key policy tool to enshrine women's belonging in the political culture and mitigate potential climates of gendered intimidation and exclusion in politics.

This was the sub-category where the responding parties of the WIPP Index had the highest general results, with an average of 58.9%, similar to last year's average of 58.1%, even after the addition of new respondents.

This section of the survey asked respondents whether their party has a code of conduct, how it is enforced, and whether this code of conduct includes non-discrimination clauses. Respondents were asked whether the party has an ethical code of conduct for behaviour at party events, and if it applies to party officials, party members, or both. Furthermore, respondents were asked to disclose whether there were mechanisms to report cases of gender-based harassment and/or discrimination and the number of recorded cases in the last three years.

60% of the responding parties have an ethical code of conduct that applies to their officials and most often also to their members.



Where parties reported following a code of conduct, 80.8% of those codes included a non-discrimination clause pertaining to some or all members of gender, sexual, ethnic, racial, religion, or other minorities and vulnerable groups.

Of the parties that did not have a code of conduct, 22% no parliamentary representation and are therefore likely to be small or young parties. The remaining parties operated in countries with majority, proportional, and mixed representation, in Asia, Europe, and Africa.



Enforcement

However, an ethical code of conduct regulating the behaviour of officials and members also requires enforcement to have a meaningful impact.

All parties, including those that answered they do not have an ethical code of conduct, were asked whether their party has a party body which deals with party member transgressions, such as inappropriate behaviour of its members in public (for example a disciplinary committee, ethical board, etc).

Two-thirds (66.7%) of responding parties indicated that they had such a body in place. Of those parties, 74% indicated that if there was a case of gender-based harassment and/or discrimination, this case could be reported to this body.

While most parties have developed a code of conduct, there is a less robust incidence of avenues to report and discipline perpetrators of gender-based harassment and/or discrimination.

D. Education

This year, parties scored a collective 48.1% for internal education and capacity-building, down from 54.5% last year. However, this change should be considered in the context of the greater uptake and volume of first-time responses. The COVID-19 pandemic may also have impacted the organisation of trainings.

There is a strong tradition in many liberal parties of capacity-building, and many LI members regularly run highly sophisticated training programmes for their membership and candidates. 36.1% of respondents reported that their parties provide capacity-building training exclusively for women, such as women's leadership programmes or female-only candidate training.

Most of the parties that provide training exclusively for women operate in proportional systems.

Parties were further asked whether the capacity building activities in the party are organised mostly on an ad hoc basis or whether the party has an annual capacity-building plan where trainings are run in a more formalised manner.



VII. HANDBOOK OF BEST PRACTICE ON GENDER BASED POLITICAL PARTY INCLUSIVITY

Beyond the Numbers: Building Inclusive Political Parties for Success is the handbook on gender-based inclusivity launched in November 2019 at the 203rd Executive Committee meeting of Liberal International taking place in Fès, Morocco.

The handbook presents best practices gathered from the experience of the LI membership across a series of expert forums, where the participants gathered to discuss many of the issues raised in this report. It also draws heavily on academic sources to recommend tools and methods which have proven to effectively increase female political participation in different contexts.

In this handbook, parties can find recommendations for future action. LI presents this report and the handbook to assist its membership in assessing, evaluating, and increasing gender-based inclusivity among our membership. We recommend readers of this report to also refer to the handbook which is available on the LI website.

ANNEX

How is the WIPPI calculated?

A higher score in the self-assessment survey indicates a higher level of inclusiveness for a political party. To achieve an accurate result, the survey is designed to be completed by several members from a single party to eliminate bias in the responses and ensure an accurate representation of the information.

However, parties operate under different social, economic, and political circumstances, since these differ across geographic contexts. It is therefore necessary to incorporate benchmark controls for this variability. Being active in an opposition political party in a country with strong democratic institutions, media freedoms, and rule of law, has different indications for political empowerment in comparison to being active in a country with a strong authoritarian leadership, fraudulent elections, captured media, and weak enforcement of the rule of law. Furthermore, there are less barriers to party inclusion in societies where women have attained a higher level of equality with men.

The LI WIPP Index has been designed to account for these variables by incorporating the Society Inclusivity Index.

The Society Inclusivity Index (SII) is a composite index that includes three different pillars:

1. Democracy and Pluralism
2. Rule of Law
3. Society and Culture

The first pillar covers the level of democracy and media freedom within a society, based on four well-known indicators: the Freedom in the World Index (Freedom House), the V Dem version 8 Index (V Dem Institute), the Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders), and the Freedom of the Press Index (Freedom House).

The second pillar covers the rule of law within a society based on the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International), the Rule of Law and World Governance Indicators (World Bank), and the Judicial Independence, Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum).

The third pillar evaluates the role women play in society, its economic situation, and the pertaining attitudes towards women and other disenfranchised groups. It is based on the Gender Inequality Index (Human Development Index, UNDP), the Group Grievances/Fragile State Index (Fund for Peace), GDP per capita in USD PPP (World Bank), and data from the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum).

The final weighted WIPP Index score is achieved when the party's self-assessment inclusiveness score is multiplied by the inverse value of their country's Society Inclusivity Index.

The unit number of the fraction of the SII score of the country at hand ($1/SSI$ Score) is multiplied by the self-assessment survey results, which then gives the number of additional points. This number is added to the survey results and constitutes the final WIPPI score.



The WIPPI score therefore considers internal party mechanisms but also the wider environment in which a party operates, thereby enabling a reasonable comparison of political parties from different countries. For example, if a party in Pakistan has fewer women among its ranks and leadership than a party in Sweden, the difference in societal contexts is also considered. This may show that the Pakistani party is more inclusive than at first glance.

It is important to note that the LI WIPP Index provides much more than just an assessment of the current state of gender-based inclusivity in a political party. It can also assist a party in identifying its strongest and weakest starting points which in turn allows it to address only those internal areas which require the most attention.

Sub-indices of the results

The final score in the Index can be divided into several subcategories. The ratio of points a certain party would get should be divided with the maximum number of points, which would show the situation within the party in that respective area as a percentage.

For example, if the UK Liberal Democrats get 6 out of 14 points in the Parliamentary Activities category, they score 42.9% (6/14). Parties can assess which segments of their work are the least and most inclusive, and it enables LI to create a set of tailor-made recommendations for each party as the Index develops.

These sub-indices are:

- 1) Parliamentary representation – comparing inclusiveness in the parliamentary representation with other national parties.
- 2) Parliamentary activities – evaluating the inclusiveness in party parliamentary activities.
- 3) Intraparty mechanisms – evaluating internal intraparty dynamics and inclusiveness in decision making mechanisms such as the party board.
- 4) Codes of conduct – evaluating whether existing rules and regulations support inclusiveness within the party and how these codes of conduct are implemented in practice.
- 5) Education – evaluating the education strategy, resources, and inclusiveness in human resources capacity building within the party.

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With the support of:
D66 Internationaal
Lange Houtstraat 11
2511CV Den Haag
The Netherlands
internationaal@d66.nl

FNF European Dialogue Programme,
Avenue de Cortenbergh 71,
Brussels, 1000 Belgium
Jana.Weber@freiheit.org

Edited by: Liberal International

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1 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2HD
United Kingdom

hrc@liberal-international.org

WWW.LIBERAL-INTERNATIONAL.ORG