

Introduction

The present work is part of the CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme) research project 'EWA – Empowering Women in Active Society,' co-funded by the European Union. This book systematically analyses critical issues related to gender equality, political representation, and the importance of women's empowerment in the active political sphere.

Different perspectives and numerous studies highlight the main milestones of women's movements and the important link between intergenerational political socialisation, women's education, socio-economic status, gender representation in the media, and the effectiveness of education and training for the political empowerment of women and young girls. With the participation of various stakeholders, including young people and civil servants, project EWA aims to promote gender equality and balanced representation of women in different political structures.

The book's first part presents the complex and multifaceted history of women's rights. It highlights essential milestones and the challenges women have faced and continue to face in Slovenia and globally. From the subordinate roles women played in ancient societies to contemporary movements demanding equality, the struggle for gender equality is a key theme. Advocacy for women's rights has consistently focused on ensuring women's inclusion in the political, economic, and social spheres. Despite significant progress, obstacles stemming from patriarchal structures, cultural norms, and institutional biases still impede the path to gender equality.

One of the key themes explored in this book is women's political and civic participation. Women tend to show less interest in conventional politics but are more involved in unconventional political activities. The findings underline the importance of strengthening women's political participation to promote a more democratic and just society. The growing presence of women in Western parliaments has led researchers to study gender in politics more intensively, with a particular focus on the balance between professional and private life. Research shows that women who choose a career in politics face more difficulties than men when it comes to managing parenthood and family responsi-

bilities. Despite recognising the need to support families and working women, institutional and policy adjustments remain insufficient to develop the political careers of women and mothers.

Understanding the intergenerational transmission of political attitudes and behaviours is crucial to fostering active citizenship among young people. This book explores how parental education, socio-economic status, and gender influence the transmission of political attitudes and behaviours from parents to children. Families with higher socioeconomic status provide more resources and opportunities for young people's political engagement, and indirect communication through the observation of political action plays an important role in political socialisation, increasing the likelihood of intergenerational transmission of political interest.

The next topic is the role of education and the media in empowering women for active political participation. The underrepresentation of women in politics undermines democratic principles and the development of inclusive policies. Education empowers women with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to engage politically, promote critical thinking, and develop leadership abilities. At the same time, the media influence public perceptions and attitudes, offer women politicians visibility, highlight gender bias, and advocate for gender equality. The political education of women and gender-balanced media representations change social norms and promote women's political careers.

By exploring the barriers that prevent women from entering politics, the project identified several challenges. From low political interest among young people due to gender stereotypes and lack of political knowledge to fear of public exposure. Based on these findings, the book's final part presents interventions, including educational manuals, workshops, and online tools designed to promote gender equality and women's political participation.

Recommendations emphasise the importance of gender equality in curricula, training for public administration, partnerships between NGOs and government, youth participation, gender-sensitive policies, positive media representation, and supportive legislation. The project's findings underline the critical need for comprehensive education, initiatives to raise awareness and reduce gender gaps, and incentives for active citizenship. This book aims to provide a thorough understanding of the complex factors that influence women's political empowerment

and offers effective strategies to increase women's political representation and influence, thereby contributing to a more just and democratic society.

Dr Suzana Košir
University of Maribor, Slovenia