

Different Paths, Shared Experiences:

Ethnic Minority Women and Local Politics in Ireland

Summary Report



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**Pauline Cullen and Shane Gough
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About the NTWF

The National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF), established in 1988, is a National Network of Traveller Women's groups and Traveller organisations from throughout Ireland. We recognise the particular oppression of Traveller women in Irish society and are working to address it from a Human Rights and Equality based approach. The NTWF aims to raise awareness of the issues affecting Traveller women, and to work towards ensuring these issues are recognised and reflected in policy development including Government policy.

About AkiDwA

Akina Dada wa Africa-AkiDwA (Swahili for sisterhood) is a national network for migrant women living in Ireland. AkiDwA's mission is to promote equality and justice for all migrant women living in Ireland. All projects aim to build the capacity of migrant women and promote their participation in their local communities, in civic and political structures, government consultations and decision-making processes.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Women from ethnic minority, racial minority and migrant backgrounds in Ireland are largely unrepresented in local and national politics. Researchers Pauline Cullen, Associate Professor, and Shane Gough (Department of Sociology, Maynooth University) collaborated with the National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) and AkiDwA (the National Network of African and Migrant Women living in Ireland) to offer this first account of how Traveller, Roma and other ethnic minority and migrant women understand, assess, and experience local politics in Ireland. The aim of the research is to move beyond previous assessments of the barriers and facilitating factors for majority-population women in politics and to build an evidence base of how ethnic minority women understand and experience political engagement at the local level. In the research we use the term *minoritised*¹ to refer to the diversity of women participants and their experiences of intersectional discrimination. The evidence presented is used as a basis to advance recommendations to improve female candidacy within ethnic minority communities. The research also aims to support: civil society partners and collaborators to improve minoritised women's opportunities to influence local governance; training programmes to motivate and encourage minoritised women to become candidates; political parties to engage with minoritised women; and to highlight the racism and sexism that minoritised women experience and the benefits they bring to local politics and policy-making.

The project was initially funded by an *Irish Research Council New Foundations Award* and

was extended through Dormant Account funding from the *Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth* (Gender Equality Unit) sourced by the NTWF to include additional participants including women from the Roma community. Traveller, Roma and migrant women voices are centred in the report to understand the intersecting forms of exclusion that shape minoritised women's views about and experiences of local government. Stakeholder perspectives were also key with training programmes, political parties and Department officials offering their assessments on the current context and future possibilities for improving minoritised women's access to local government.

Minoritised Women as Local Political Actors

In our analysis we cover as many stages as possible in the process of running for office, from initial consideration and potential recruitment, to standing for selection, being selected, and running a campaign. Data was gathered between March and September 2021. It comprised 43 online interviews with racialised, ethnic minoritised and migrant women community leaders, those with an interest in (aspirants) and who have run for political office (candidates: successful and unsuccessful); as well as advocacy organisations, public officials and political parties.

We offer a composite of women's accounts from different communities communicated through their own words and analysis. Our approach was attentive to the prevalence of sexist and racist discourse at the local and national level as a factor

¹ The term "minoritised" ([Gunaratnum 2003](#)) refers to how people are actively minoritised by others rather than naturally existing as a minority, as the terms "racial minorities" or "ethnic minorities" imply. The term "racially minoritised" or "ethnically minoritised" confirms that minoritisation is a social process shaped by power. Although we use "minoritised", we do not dismiss the use of racial and ethnic categories with which people identify, such as Traveller, Roma, Black, Asian, Indigenous, Migrant and mixed race. The term "ethnic-indigenous" is also used by Traveller women as is the term "Minceir". The idea here is to acknowledge the complex ways in which these forms of discrimination intersect in the lived experience of the women participants and their communities.

that can suppress the interest and motivation of minoritised women to become involved in local politics.

We draw on the concepts of *political imagination* (Browne and Diehl 2019) and *political agency* (Buckley and Galligan 2020) to reframe female candidacy from an intersectional perspective. Political imagination refers to what politics means to minoritised women and how they understand and assess themselves as political actors, how their community and/or social group is perceived in political terms, and what they suggest politics should and could be. We situate the political imagination of minoritised women in tension with a broader dominant political imaginary that reinforces existing ideas, practices and patterns of political engagement.

Political Agency is a term used to assess the extent to which women feel enabled to make claims upon democratic politics, the State, and political institutions to pursue/secure political outcomes (Buckley and Galligan 2013). In this study we place the concept of political imagination in dialogue with that of political agency. We do this to acknowledge the links between existing forms of political work done by minoritised women in Ireland and the politicisation they experience through this work that underlines their political imagination. This includes how minoritised women operate forms of collective and careful leadership to challenge cultural attitudes, reform laws and policies, and provide vital social services. This involves invisible yet essential political work that is often not recognised as political leadership by political parties and broader society. A key way to reframe the candidacy of minoritised women is then to highlight the formation of their own distinctive political imagination and how it shapes their sense of political agency and exclusion, a process that has led some women to consider entering public office.

Context: Past and Present

We acknowledge the progress made in women's access to politics in Ireland (Buckley 2020; Galligan and Buckley 2018). However, we note the legacy of Ireland's gender regime and patriarchal constitutional settlement that set the terms for a political culture and institutional system that has perpetuated male overrepresentation in politics. This includes assessments of how political parties have responded to gender quotas in ways that have limited the advancement of women candidates (Mariani et al 2021; Buckley 2020). Any assessment of minoritised women's access to politics in Ireland must recognise the historic and current racialisation, racism and discrimination experienced by Traveller women (FRA 2020; Oireachtas 2021b) and the racism and social exclusion that shape many racial and/or ethnic minority and migrant women's lives (McGinnity et al 2017). We also note the extreme experiences of marginalisation endured by Roma women in Ireland (Pavee Point and National Traveller Women's Forum 2017).

We adopt the definition and understanding of racism used by the *Anti-Racism Committee* in its 2021 National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) interim report (Government of Ireland 2020). This definition of racism includes "the power dynamics present in those structural and institutional arrangements, practices, policies and cultural norms, which have the effect of excluding or discriminating against individuals or groups, based on their identity" (p. 5). This affirms the structural and systemic aspects of racism and draws on Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Notably, this is a dynamic and living approach that acknowledges the intersectionality between racism and all other forms of oppression, including oppression experienced by people based on gender, sexuality, gender identity, disability and socio-economic circumstances.²

² In line with this we also acknowledge that racialisation (the process of being defined as a racial group) is a gendered process that applies to ethnic-indigenous women, black women and migrant women (Bell and Borelli 2021).

Analysis of racism and discrimination in Irish society has confirmed the persistence of discriminatory behaviours and attitudes ([McGinnity et al 2020a](#); [Joseph 2021](#); [Pavee Point and National Traveller Women's Forum 2017](#)). A reluctance to confront white supremacy and privilege maintains existing racial and ethnic hierarchies that are reinforced by generalised ambivalence regarding the benefits that “whiteness” bestows from unearned public and private power ([Joseph 2019](#); [Michael and Joseph 2021](#)).

International Policy Context

The low participation levels of minoritised women in politics across Europe is now widely acknowledged as an issue that requires a systematic approach. Outcomes of recent examinations of Ireland by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ([CERD 2020](#)), the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ([Council of Europe 2018a](#)) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW 2017](#)) all underline the importance of political participation and recommend positive action measures for the political inclusion of minoritised women. The 2020-2025 [EU Gender Equality Strategy](#) includes a recognition of the importance of taking a cross-cutting intersectional approach when it comes to the inclusion of women. [The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025](#), in turn, notes the importance of local community integration initiatives as having significant potential to create more racially tolerant and inclusive communities. [The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion \(2021-2027\)](#) includes recommendations on gender mainstreaming and anti-discrimination to support representation and inclusion especially at the local level. [The EU Roma strategic framework 2020-2030](#) in turn emphasises political participation and inclusion.

National Policy Context

While the Irish Government's recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority and the [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021](#) were significant developments, [research](#) shows that Travellers continue to experience significant barriers to healthcare, adequate and culturally appropriate housing, education, and meaningful work. Furthermore, the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic minority and indigenous peoples has no legislative underpinning, provides no new legal rights to Travellers and places no new legal responsibilities on the State. The [Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020](#) includes commitments to equality and integration yet migrants in Ireland continue to experience exclusion ([Michael 2020](#)). Migrant women also suffer due to gender-blind asylum and migration policies, which leave them at risk of economic and social exclusion ([MRCI 2008](#)). A cross-cutting priority issue for the NAPAR ([p. 16](#)) is Equal Participation in Decision Making. Other national plans, such as the Programme for Government, include commitments to promoting the inclusion and integration of minorities³ and progress on gender parity in representation at national and local level. The [National Strategy for Women and Girls](#) also includes commitments to address the underrepresentation of women in politics.

Compartmentalisation and Fragmentation

Minoritised women are located at *the intersection of policies and strategies* that may aim to address gender inequality and racism, promote integration and/or support Traveller and Roma inclusion. Yet diversity and gender equality policies are often practised along parallel lines and, coupled with the absence of disaggregated data ([IHREC 2021b](#)), have made it difficult to articulate and advocate for the intersectional interests of minoritised women

3 The [Programme for Government](#) (2020) Mission on Reforming and Reimagining our Public Life includes commitments to “[e]mpower local authorities to encourage improved gender and ethnic mix in local elections” and to “[c]onsider the recommendations of the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) report on Women beyond the Dáil, More Women in Local Government”.

and their communities. Minoritised women have also been disproportionately negatively affected by the multiplicative and overlapping effects of the economic and Covid-19 crises ([Hennessy 2021](#); [Joseph 2021](#)). Understanding minoritised women's political experiences, opportunities and priorities requires a focus on the interaction between a variety of factors that shape their presence, power and influence at the local level.

Local politics and high energy democracy

An erosion of women's rights, and the racism and xenophobia evident in the influence of far-right organisations ([Lombardo et al 2021](#); [ISD 2021](#)) underlines the necessity for political and institutional support for diverse representation. Local government reform ([Lloyd 2016](#)) and changes to how the State resources civil society organisations have also altered the terms under which minoritised women engage with local structures ([Bennett 2021](#)) and the conditions of local councillors working to support their communities ([AILG 2021b](#); [Moorhead 2020](#)). Strong and representative local governance is also understood as a prerequisite for the high-energy democracy required to secure equal and sustainable societies ([Murphy 2019](#)).

Politics, Diversity and Responsiveness

Where minoritised women are underrepresented in decision-making there is a lack of responsiveness of politics to their interests ([Crowder-Meyer 2021](#)). Such imbalance affects how minoritised women feel about democracy and reinforces their perceptions that politics is not for them. Moreover, politics is experienced as something that is done to and not with them ([Celis and Childs 2020](#)). In short, the weak representational power of minoritised women means that their specific perspectives and forms of expertise remain marginal to policy debates. However, even as candidates, minoritised women disrupt societal

expectations about leadership. In other contexts, the election of minoritised women has contributed to breaking down racial, ethnic and gender barriers in electoral politics ([Brown 2014](#)). Minoritised women can then serve as role models and mentors, helping other minoritised women run for office ([Sanbonmatsu 2015](#)) and improving the substantive representation of other underrepresented groups, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of democracy.

Calls to reform the conditions of office-holding for all women ([Moorhead 2020](#); [AILG 2021b](#); [Oireachtas 2021a](#); [Women for Election 2021](#); [NWC 2021](#)) and [recent resourcing](#) of diversity initiatives at local level indicate an impetus to diversify politics. This is aligned with a greater awareness of how sexism and racism in everyday life and social media deters women and especially minoritised women from entering public roles ([Michael 2020](#); [Felle et al 2020](#); [NWC 2021](#); [AILG-CMG 2021](#)). This report builds on these analyses and initiatives while drawing attention to the *specific and persistent barriers faced by racialised ethnic and migrant women in public life*.

Summary of Findings

The Political Calculus of Minoritised Women

Racism and sexism are motivating factors for many minoritised women in considering a political role. Traveller women's lifelong experiences of anti-Traveller racism has shaped their political calculus in significant ways. One Traveller interviewee summed up their experience of anti-Traveller racism:

"it is important that we believe we can make a change, but you do start to doubt yourself, how can I run for local public office, if I cannot get served in the local pub?!"

For some migrant women, witnessing the challenges migrants face accessing public services and integrating into local communities influenced their decision to run. This Black migrant woman

interviewee discussed the response she received from local officials when she would advocate for minoritised voters:

“most of the time ... you don’t even get a response... So I just started to say to myself that I think it’s so important that I get involved in politics because I need to be there”.

Some minoritised women, particularly Traveller women, expressed anticipation that the majority population may not vote for them:

“I could run to make a point but I know I am not going to get the votes. ... the knowledge that the majority of the settled population are not going to vote for you, that the numbers are against them is what deters Travellers from candidacy”.

Minoritised women face a complex set of calculations in weighing up the idea of seeking a local political role. These calculations are influenced by how gender, ethnicity and race intersect to shape access to resources, familial and care responsibilities, and the likelihood of experiencing sexism and racism. Minoritised women participants as such consider candidacy in *relational terms*. They hold communal and value-driven objectives for their communities and the broader society. Women participants also acknowledged common ground with other women from other communities although as one participant underlined, *“similar issues affect us differently”*. They also do not necessarily lack confidence or ambition. Rather, they respond rationally to constraints and risks. The *costs of candidacy* for many included a risk of isolation from their own community, especially if they advanced to public office, as well as a lack of inclusion in their new public role.

However, for others the costs of not running are too high (Dittmar 2020b). Catalysts included the extraordinary loss of life in the Traveller community in the 2015 Carrickmines fire or, from further afield, the death of George Floyd in the United States, or how discrimination and disadvantage in education is now reproduced in their own children’s lives.

Assets for Local Candidacy

All women interviewed were deeply involved in community organisations. For Traveller and some black women community activism was more likely to be in service of their own communities with less involvement in majority community organisations. This work is often overlooked by political parties when seeking candidates. As such, *not all community activity counts the same*.

Many EU migrant women acknowledged the *benefits that whiteness* provided them *in contrast to the hyper-visibility experienced by both Traveller women and women of colour*. However, white migrant women also experience being ‘othered’ as women and as migrants. Overall, minoritised women struggle to access assets essential for local political office such as the currency of *localness*, including *visibility, networks*, and a familiarity with Irish political culture.

“Ambition from the Margins”

For many minoritised women, attempts to enter the institutional contexts of candidacy (political parties, training, fundraising, campaigning, media) forces them to navigate unfamiliar formal and informal rules and spaces that are experienced as exclusionary. Gender, racial and ethnic stereotypes, the lack of role models and being the ‘first’ to run exacerbates these dynamics. In this sense they were *‘space invaders’* (Puar 2004) and, without sponsorship and support, some were relegated to the margins of these spaces and processes. The result is that for some the experience of party politics confirms a lack of fit with their political imagination and suppresses their interest and motivation to run.

For minoritised women *a decision not to run for office* can also be linked to self-protective strategies that include an avoidance of situations where racism and sexism arise. Deterrence though does not mean the absence of interest in political office, while many women evaluated their prospects of securing office as low, they reasoned that the *symbolic effect* of their candidacies justified their decision to run.

While all these women exercise aspects of “*ambition from the margins*”⁴, women from different ethnic and racial groups also advanced distinctive forms of *political imagination* and different interpretations of *political self-efficacy*. These differences shape their sense of political agency, and their *linked fate with their own community*. This sense of a linked fate was strongest for Traveller and Roma women whose decision to pursue office was in part motivated by a commitment to highlight the trauma and racial discrimination they and their communities experience. For migrant women of colour their sense of linked fate was rooted in their experiences of hypervisibility, gendered racism and, for some, their citizenship status. However, in general women participants expressed their intent to represent not just their own community but also the concerns of the broader local community. Some of these women worked as ‘*cultural brokers*’ initiating local intercultural and/or migrant organisations and community fora.

As one migrant woman stated:

“we need a community voice...but it is important to me that I can help bridge divides between communities.”

For Traveller women the cumulative effects of anti-Traveller racism weighed heavily on the community:

“there has been too much shame, Travellers stand in the shade – get comfortable hiding – we are doomed to be blamed for the things that other people do, it is time we got out into the light.”

Most successful candidates received significant party support, high intensity mentoring and sponsorship enabling them to adapt to the political system in key ways. However, all women participants maintain a critical sensibility about public life and an expressed commitment to ‘*do politics differently*’. While some migrant women reported being sought by parties “*looking to connect to*

my community” this was not the case for Travellers, confirming weak demand for their votes and candidacy from political parties. As one advocate commented:

“I don’t see parties trying to locate Travellers or Traveller women to become candidates, there is no drive, there is no campaign.”

Canvassing and Gendered Racism

For candidates and elected representatives, campaigning itself can be seen as an intersectional institution (Siuw and Begum 2021) where the intersection of candidates’ identities are weighted against the societal value placed on gender, race, ethnicity, class and ablebodiedness (ILMI 2022). Canvassing was a mixed experience, positive in some respects, but at times discouraging:

“some people they just open the door, it’s enough to see your face and they shut it again.”

This interviewee described how racist and sexist incidents affected her while canvassing.

“actually puts the fear of god in me in a way, that I wasn’t able to cope and then it gave me a thing of wanting to always have eyes in the back of my head because with canvassing you don’t know who is following behind you”.

For Traveller, Roma and Black women racialised identities carry specific penalties although all migrant women experience forms of sexualised and racist abuse. This abuse occurred on and offline and included in-person racist and sexist harassment, abuse and intimidation. Concerns were also raised about the links between such abuse and stereotypical representations of minorities in traditional media.

While all women participants acknowledged they had experienced racism and sexism, some downplayed these experiences and their effects. There is apprehension about raising issues of sexism

4 Dowe (2020, 697) introduces the concept of *ambition from the margins* to capture the sense of community that leads Black Women to engage in a unique type of political work. She defines the long history of Black Women’s politicisation as a form of *radical imagination* that included innovative forms of political engagement despite *marginalisation*.

and racism because of the *political costs of doing so*. There is also a lack of clarity about where to report such issues.

A common strategy was to ‘block’ or ignore social media abuse, or, if possible, to delegate its management to a colleague or friend. Of course, these strategies did not always work as harassment also took place face-to-face or at private residences. All participants registered the emotional and psychological ‘toll’ or ‘cost’ of contemplating or competing for a political role as a woman, as a carer and as a minority. In line with previous research (Cullen and McGing 2019; Lima 2020), despite these experiences and events, *most participants remained interested in pursuing a local political role*.

Recruitment, Training and Support of Minoritised Women Candidates

Most women engaged with training programmes, although the *network effect* of participation was useful for some more than others and was least useful for Traveller women. Participation in programmes was especially helpful to migrant women and there is evidence that existing programmes are evolving to include the multiple, diverse, and intersectional realities shaping minoritised women’s lives. Women participants were clear that training should be inclusive, holistic and attuned to the specific obstacles facing minoritised women:

“the training should be a way of protecting yourself ... mentally, physically as well as spiritually and emotionally. ...if you meet [sexism or racism] on the door you know, yes, it is going to be hurtful ... but then after that how do you deal with it in a way that it doesn’t remain with you, then it affects your whole campaign”.

For another migrant women candidate, programmes needed to adopt proactive and inclusive strategies to attract the most diverse women:

“Popular capable women are ready to run and that is great, but training programmes need to break away from the ‘already ready’ – that just rein-

forces the loop within parties who are looking for a particular profile ... you have got to get into the community and do in-reach – go to their own organisations and spaces and you will reach women who are most excluded from the political system.”

There was a general sentiment among training programmes of the importance to not only train women but also advocate for changes in systems of representation as one trainer commented: *“to avoid trying to assimilate women into a space that wasn’t designed for them.”* Although we caution against making training programmes alone responsible for the diversification of local politics, as this requires a whole of system approach.

We find that stakeholders, including political parties and public officials, endorse diversity in political representation. Individual politicians and party officials voiced strong commitments to anti-racist practices. This was often linked to their awareness of the incidence of far-right activity in Ireland.

Parties demonstrated intent to ‘diversify’ and improve outreach to minoritised aspirants. Participants from parties underlined their awareness that positive action was required to diversify politics especially at the local level. However, diversity and anti-racism have not yet become core to the organisational capacity of parties and, for some, satisfying existing gender quota requirements is an ongoing challenge that supersedes efforts to attract more diverse candidates. As such, while commitments to anti-racism exist, expertise and human capital to realise such commitments are lacking. As one political party representative commented:

“we need to resource a specific officer in parties to recruit women and more diverse candidates, this could be challenging for small parties. But the key is ensuring it is an identifiable role in the party to reach out to local offices and organisations. It is about encouraging women from underrepresented communities; it is not just gender that is holding them back.”

When minoritised women are supported by political parties, this gives important signals to the electorate.

One interviewee said of political parties:

“it is not enough to have one face of an African person ... It’s not enough at all. ... there has to be participation in every aspect... let there be enough, enough women, enough Africans, enough Travelers, enough. Just one person is not enough.”

The state and government departments play an important role in supporting and scaffolding minoritised women’s access to public life. To date compartmentalisation, in particular a tendency to separate gender equality from diversity initiatives, has left minoritised women the subjects of specific interventions without a comprehensive approach to addressing their political exclusion.

Officials offered candid accounts of their efforts to support minoritised women and their interest in acquiring expertise and input to create more integrated responses and better outcomes. As one official noted:

“With all the strategies, actual responsibility for local elections, lie within another department. So we have that coordination role, but the actual actions do lie elsewhere. That is a challenge for us to be honest, because we can do only what we can do.”

Increasing the number of minoritised women in local politics requires confronting the sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination including the normative whiteness of public life that combine to discount minoritised women’s political imagination and diminish their political agency. Combating the underrepresentation of minoritised women in politics then demands specific and targeted measures that may include achieving gender-balanced electoral lists through gender and ethnic quotas; inclusive training and mentoring programmes; zero-tolerance of sexism and

racism (and other forms of discrimination) with clear channels to report sexual and racial harassment or hate speech and targeted funding for minoritised women candidates, minoritised women’s associations and networks.





Recommendations

State

Legislate for local gender quota incorporating a nested ethnic quota

Given the numerical disadvantage of Traveller and Roma communities, explore the provision of reserved seats and the development of a Special Electoral District

Reform the Seanad to include a diversity panel with gender parity (including Traveller and Roma women's representation)

Within existing funding to parties under s.18 of the Electoral Act 1997, allow for expenditure to diversify membership and candidate lists. As recommended by SIPO, require parties to spend this funding in the allocated year, or lose it.

Require political parties to collect and publish diversity data on membership and candidates (both nominated and selected candidates) including funding of candidates disaggregated by gender and ethnicity

Fund equality, diversity and inclusion training including intercultural training for elected members and staff of political parties, local authorities, councils and the Oireachtas

Fund a political leadership officer located in the respective minoritised women's representative organisations to liaise between Traveller, Roma and migrant women, and political parties

Require compulsory Codes of Practice with zero tolerance for sexism and racism with sanctions for breaches and clear channels to report incidents of sexism and racism both within political parties and political institutions (Oireachtas and Local Authorities)

Strengthen and provide legislation for Media Codes of Practice on anti-racist and anti-sexist reporting (including a media fund to support positive representations of Traveller, Roma, and other ethnic minority cultures)

Implement hate crime/speech legislation (on and offline) and create specific offences of:

- hate speech (including racist and sexist abuse) against politicians;
- hate speech against any group while holding elected office; and
- include a definition of gender-based political violence.

Facilitate family friendly work practices including provision of childcare facilities, remote meetings of Councils and for remote voting and implement the recommendations of the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament and of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality on Leadership in Politics and Public Life.

Establish programmes at all levels of education promoting political participation of minoritised women and girls

Provide multiannual funding to support minoritised women's organisations to support participation in programmes to build political knowledge

Provide multiannual funding for training programmes targeted at minoritised women including high intensity mentoring, English language training, childcare support and stipend for attendance

Provide a basic wage for minoritised female candidates for duration of election campaign and allow campaign funding to be used for childcare

Ensure that national strategies (including NTRIS; MIS; NSWG) are integrated and adopt an intersectional approach to minoritised women with a specific focus on political participation

Consult minoritised women's representative organisations in the design and implementation of any positive actions or diversity mechanisms

Political Parties

Develop and implement a Gender and Diversity Action Plan including a dedicated equality, diversity and inclusion officer with relevant expertise

Set candidate targets for ethnic minority representation (including Travellers and Roma, and with gender parity)

Include ethnic minorities (with gender parity) in the Taoiseach's Seanad Nominees

Review and expand candidate recruitment processes to engage minoritised women

Ring fence funding to support minoritised women candidates

Extend participation in internships and shadowing programmes to all minoritised women at the local level

Ensure gender parity with diversity targets for internal party committees (including those involved in the selection of candidates)

Introduce Codes of Practice for party members with zero tolerance on sexism and racism with sanctions for breaches and clear channels to report sexism and racism

Make commitments on by-elections and co-optations for preference to be given to minoritised women

Provide comprehensive resilience training for minoritised women candidates and elected representatives including how to deal with social media abuse, sexism, racism (including anti-Traveller racism)

Collect and publish gender disaggregated data with ethnic identifier on all applicants throughout the selection process, including unsuccessful applicants; candidates and members after the next Local Election with official election results

Support youth wings to outreach to minoritised women and fund leadership training for young minoritised women

Sign the Sixth International Roma Women Conference Pledge on political representation of Roma women

Local Authorities

Provide childcare facilities in Councils (funded by the State)

Create and implement paid internship programmes for minoritised women in local authorities /councils

Sign up to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

Electoral Commission

Remove any barriers, in particular the requirement to attend a Garda station, to voter registration for Traveller, Roma and other ethnic minorities

Comprehensive voter registration and awareness campaign to increase the numbers of minorities registered to vote

Collect and monitor gender disaggregated data with ethnic identifier on all political party candidate applicants throughout the selection process, including unsuccessful applicants, candidates and members after the next Local Election with official election results

Civil Society/Training Organisations

Seek opportunities to establish a philanthropic fund for underrepresented women for training and campaign funding

Support leadership initiatives for minoritised women and girls in other contexts (e.g. Community Development Organisations; Trade Unions; Universities)

Ensure the representation of minoritised women on boards and/or steering committees

Training programs: facilitate the creation of networks for minoritised women

Training programs: facilitate inclusive training for minoritised women, with migrant and/or Traveller-led programs including modules led and delivered by role models



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