

A Model for the Equal Representation in the Nordic Countries

Victoriano Ramírez-González (Contact autor)

Department of Applied Mathematics
 Faculty of Civil Engineering
 Campus of Fuentenueva s/n, C.P. 18071. Granada (Spain)
 e-mail: vramirez@ugr.es, Telephone: 958244158, Fax: 958249513

Blanca Luisa Delgado-Márquez

Department of International and Spanish Economics
 Faculty of Business Studies and Economics
 Campus of Cartuja s/n, C.P. 18071. Granada (Spain)
 e-mail: bdelgado@ugr.es, Telephone: 958241000 (ext. 20325), Fax: 958246222

Adolfo López-Carmona

Department of Applied Mathematics
 Faculty of Civil Engineering
 Campus of Fuentenueva s/n, C.P. 18071. Granada (Spain)
 e-mail: adolfo@ugr.es, Telephone: 958249513

University of Granada (Spain)

Abstract

This paper presents a model to organize blocked lists of candidates that lead to equal representation of both genders in parliamentary elections.

Parity is sought in each party and also in each electoral constituency. It is based on a system of zipper lists per party, but the parties have no freedom to fix the starting of the zipper in each electoral constituency, since they should alternate when passing from one constituency to another (going from larger to smaller in size) and in each constituency half of the parties must initiate their zipper list with a gender and the other half with the opposite one, in such a way that there would be freedom for the election of gender at the beginning of a party list (that could be done by drawing lots to ascertain if it begins with a man or a woman). This election would determine the beginning all political party zipper lists.

Basing the beginning of the zipper list for each party and in each constituency on an impartial draw leads to a much greater equity in the representation of gender which allows the parties freedom to establish the gender of its first candidate in each constituency.

The proposed method is submitted to the last parliamentary election results in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark which have been the four parties with the greatest presence of women in the period that goes from 1975 to 2000 according to the IPU (International Parliamentary Union) and in this way we observe that it leads to great parity. The results show that in the four countries the equality of gender would have increased on a global level, at party level and at constituency level, even approaching in many cases 50 % for each gender.

Key words: Electoral System, Gender Quotas, Equal Representation, Zipper List, Nordic Countries.

JEL Codes: C02, D63, D72, D78, Z18

1-. Introduction

Throughout history positions of representation in democratic parliaments have been held mostly by men, even more so the further back we go. A behaviour that could have been logical in the past, due to the division of tasks that existed in the family structure.

However, at present nothing justifies that gender discrimination must exist in the political representation of women. In fact, to change and compensate this initial tendency, different countries have attempted to enforce a greater representation of women.

There are two ways to increase the participation of women in politics: by establishing quotas in national legislations or by establishing quotas in the internal regulation of parties as occurs nowadays in Nordic countries.

Thus there are countries whose electoral legislation contains specific restrictions regarding the configuration of their electoral lists (for example, in zipper lists the even positions are held by candidates of one gender and the uneven ones by the other). In other cases it has been the political parties which have internally and voluntarily applied quotas of gender. For example, the Nordic parties have been doing it since the seventies; namely, in this case there is no legislation that obliges all the electoral party lists to establish a minimum quota of either sex, but it has been practiced voluntarily by the political parties.

To enforce quotas in gender representation is not so simple to justify from a political point of view, even though it has its pros and cons. Some of the most relevant both for and against are stated in section 2. Section 3 shows the presence of women in countries that have obtained the greatest percentage of representation in recent years. We observe that the Nordic countries are in the highest positions, and this is reinforced much more if we move back to the elections in the last quarter of the century XX. For this reason, in section 4 we have stated the regulation of the Nordic countries regarding gender representation.

Obtaining a high parity can be simple when the electoral constituencies are large and the number of political parties is small. Then, in such a case the zipper lists can give satisfactory results. However, this same kind of list can lead to gender domination in parliament when the constituencies are small, e.g. in Chile, they all have 2 seats.

For this reason, to have enough guarantees to obtain parity in representation, whatever the size of the electoral constituencies and the number of political parties that take part in the elections, in section 5 we have introduced a method, we denominate triplex zipper, which in addition to obliging parties to use zipper lists, also obliges each party to alternate the gender with which the list is started when passing from one electoral constituency to the next in decreasing order of size. And thirdly, it also obliges all political party lists in the same electoral constituency to initiate half of them with one gender and the other half with the opposite sex.

In section 6 to demonstrate the consistency of this method we submit it to the results obtained in several of the last electoral processes in the four Nordic countries. We have analyzed thirty elections in total. We observe that in case the proposed method had been applied, in all cases the representation of each gender at global level would have comprised between 48 % and 52 %. This means parity was almost perfect. At party level, parity had also resulted quite high.

The proposed method completely limits the freedom of political parties to elect the candidates that head the lists. Sometimes this is crucial, e. g., a small party,

that can only obtain one seat, could have its leader vetoed because it corresponds to the opposite gender to head the list. It would mean that the method is more theoretical than practical. To avoid these situations, in section 7, we suggest some variants that give the political parties some possibilities to choose who heads some of their lists without producing a drastic imbalance in the parity. Finally the conclusions are made in section 8.

2. Theoretical framework

The importance of women's political empowerment has been recognized within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with one of the indicators for monitoring Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women) being the proportion of seats held by women in lower or single houses of national parliaments.

There has been a slow and steady improvement in the representation of women in national parliaments worldwide.

For instance, since the beginning of 2011, four European countries (France, the Netherlands, Italy and Belgium) have approved laws that establish a minimum quota of women in the decision-making organs of private companies.

However, there are still important differences in the proportion of women elected to the legislative branch across countries.

Despite all regions having shown progress in improving gender balance in national parliaments during recent years, notable differences still remain. Table 1 shows the regional differences in women's representation in national parliaments. The proportion of women members of parliament is much lower in other regions, including the Americas (22.3%), non-Nordic Europe (20.3%), sub-Saharan Africa (19.5%), Asia (18.2%), and the Pacific (12.4%). The worst record for women's representation is the Arab countries, where women constitute less than 12% of elected representatives. Structural factors (e.g. socio-economic development), the impact of political institutions (e.g. electoral systems based on proportional representation), and cultural factors (e.g. predominance of traditional attitudes towards gender roles) have been identified to account for the continuing dearth of women in political leadership (Norris & Inglehart, 2001).

Table 1. Regional differences in the percentages of women in national parliaments (single or lower houses), 2011

Region	Women
Nordic countries	42.1%
Americas	22.3%
Europe - OSCE member countries (including Nordic countries)	22.2%
Europe - OSCE member countries (excluding Nordic countries)	20.3%
Sub-Saharan Africa	19.5%
Asia	18.2%
Pacific	12.4%
Arab States	11.4%

Source: Self-elaboration from Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Regional averages of women in national parliaments". www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm

Over the last two decades, there has been a significant diffusion of gender norms globally; first via the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1979), then the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and, recently, the Millennium Development Goals (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2002; Krook, 2006; Krook & True, 2008).

In many countries electoral gender quotas are considered to be an effective measure to improve gender balance in parliament. Many countries in the world implement gender quotas to offset obstacles that women have faced in the electoral process. Prior studies have pointed out that an important change has taken place in the established rank order of countries according to the level of women's political representation (Dahlerup, 2003). Indeed, the introduction of gender quotas in political systems of a broad number of areas (e.g. Africa, the Balkans, Latin America and South Asia) has played a crucial role in this phenomenon.

An electoral quota for women may be mandated in the constitution, stipulated in the national legislation of the country or formulated in a political party statute. Typically, three types of electoral quota are distinguished, the first two being legislated quotas (constitutional and/or legislative) and the third one voluntary. Reserved seats imply the reservation of a number of seats for women in a legislative assembly (e.g. Jordan, Uganda, Rwanda, etc). Second, legislated candidate quotas stipulate that a certain number of candidate positions must be reserved for women (e.g. Burkina Faso, Uganda, Belgium, France, Slovenia, etc). Third, voluntary political party quota involves a party committing itself to nominating a certain percentage of female candidates for electoral lists (e.g. Germany, Norway, Sweden, etc). This does not include quotas for internal party structures. One country may have several quota types.

At present, at least 90 countries apply an electoral gender quota of some kind for the lower or single chamber of their national parliaments. Of these countries, 16 have reserved seats for women in the lower or single chamber of parliament, 33 have legislated candidate quotas and 54 have voluntary political party quotas.

Quotas are highly controversial in some countries, whereas quota proposals have passed with very little discussion in other countries. The decision as to whether or not to introduce a quota is increasingly influenced by the recommendations of international organizations and by developments in different national contexts. The impact of quotas, argues Krook (2009), has a direct relationship with the "fit" between quota measures and existing electoral institutions.

Various arguments have been presented both for and against the introduction of quotas as a means to increase the political presence of women. On the one hand, several explanations postulate in favour of gender quota adoption. First, gender quotas are seen as the most effective way of achieving a better gender balance. From this viewpoint, gender quotas are not perceived as being discriminating against men but compensating women for structural barriers in the electoral process. Second, having more women visible in the political realm helps to combat gender stereotypes and "traditional" gender roles. Third, provided that a growing body of evidence has demonstrated that men and women differ in policy preferences (e.g. Miller, 2008), increasing the proportion of female leaders through quotas can improve representation of women's policy interests. On the other hand, several arguments push against the implementation of gender quotas. First, prior works claim that gender quotas are discriminatory against men and therefore undemocratic. Second, others argue that the measures result in a less competent legislature because the use of quotas could worsen allocation by assigning leadership positions to worse-

performing leaders. Third, quotas are seen to distort the idea of representation, by giving the erroneous idea that only women can represent women, while men can represent both men and women.

The quotas were introduced in the leftwing parties in the decades of the 70s and 80s. However, the rightwing parties considered them antiliberal (Dahlerup, 2002). Nevertheless, this form of intervention has its supporters and detractors. Table 2 shows the main arguments for and against implementing gender quotas put forward in the literature.

Table 2. Arguments for and against implementing gender quotas

Arguments for	Arguments against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender quotas do not discriminate, but offset obstacles that prevent women from obtaining fair representation in political positions • In fact, political parties control the nomination process and the voters are not those who primarily decide who is elected. • Their implementation implies that several women participate together in a commission or assembly, thus minimizing the pressure and stress which women often undergo when they are the only representative figures. • Women have the right as citizens to balanced representation. • Women's experiences are necessary in politics. • Women are as qualified as men, but their preparation is despised and minimized in a political system dominated by men. • The introduction of quotas can generate conflicts, but these will be of temporary character. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of quotas generates significant conflicts in internal party structures. • Quotas basically contradict equal opportunities when preference is given to women. • Quotas are not so democratic, since voters must be capable of deciding who is elected. • Quota implementation implies that politicians are elected because of their gender and not their preparation, displacing more qualified candidates. • Many women do not want to be elected just because they are women.

Source: Self-Elaboration from www.idea.int y Dalherup (2002).

From liberal stances of individualism and meritocracy, it is put forward that the quotas can cause the “best ones” not to be elected (Verge, 2011). For now some studies carried out demonstrate that new women deputies are generally younger, have a lower occupational status and accumulate less political experience than the elected women without the help of quotas (Bird, 2003; Kolinsky, 1991; Murray, 2010). The liberal stances also put forward that the priorities of women and men are different in, for example, the attention and time dedicated to the family, and therefore the parties will have difficulties in finding enough women who want to be candidates (Verge, 2011).

From the feminist sector, what is worrying is the fact that the quotas generate a glass roof for women themselves, making parties just select the minimum established

percentage of women. In the same way, they are also afraid that the quotas promote the election of women from elites that act as substitutes of their fathers and husbands, or that have a high dependence on their recruiter, thus being more manipulable and merely decorative (Cowley y Childs, 2003; Krook, 2008; Nanivadekar, 2006).

One of the positive aspects of a proportional system with closed and blocked lists is that measures can be taken in favour of implementing gender quotas in electoral lists (Freidenvall, Dahlerup y Skeie, 2006). According to Tania Verge (2011), centralizing electoral list elaboration increases the selection of women candidates for several reasons:

- The central executive of the party has the power to coordinate selection processes carried out by inferior territorial party structures and guarantee in this way the fulfilment of the quota imposed by the party.
- The members of the central executive of the party are usually more educated people more disposed to gender equality in feminine representation in political positions (Randall, 1987; Uriarte y Ruiz 1999: 212). Furthermore, the greater the number of women belonging to management, the more probable it is that they implement favourable actions to supervise and guarantee that the quotas are fulfilled (Kittilson, 2006).

3-. The presence of women in democratic parliaments

In Table 3 we record the average percentage of women in the last four legislatures from countries with greater feminine presence in their respective parliaments. The first four positions belong to Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway, precisely the four countries we will use to prove how good the method proposed in this paper is. During the elections held in the last quarter of the 20th century, both Norway and Finland hold the highest positions in feminine representation. In fact, Finland held first position in the period from 1975-1980 and Norway, in the period from 1985-1990.

Tabla 3. The average percentage of women in parliaments during the last four elections

Country	%
Sweden	44,99
Finland	39,75
Denmark	38,13
Norway	37,56
Netherlands	37,00
Iceland	34,92
Spain	34,14
Belgium	33,67
Germany	31,92
Austria	30,19
Switzerland	26,38
Portugal	23,70
Canada	22,16
Luxembourg	20,42

United Kingdom	19,56
EEUU	16,32
Italy	14,88
Greece	13,75
Ireland	13,40
France	11,96

If we just focus on the last election in each country, Table 4 summarizes the presence of women in parliaments.

Table 4. Presence of women in democratic parliaments during the last elections

Country	Election	% Women
Sweden	2010	44,70
Iceland	2009	42,86
Finland	2011	42,50
Netherlands	2010	40,67
Norway	2009	39,64
Belgium	2010	39,33
Denmark	2011	39,11
Spain	2011	36,00
Germany	2009	32,80
Switzerland	2011	28,50
Austria	2008	27,87
Portugal	2011	26,52
Luxembourg	2009	25,00
Canada	2011	24,68
United Kingdom	2010	22,31
Italy	2008	21,27
France	2007	18,54
Greece	2009	17,33
USA	2010	16,78
Ireland	2011	15,06

Both tables show that the greater the number of uninominal districts, as in the majority systems (e.g., the United Kingdom, France, Germany), the lower the proportion of women is.

Nordic countries hold the first positions in the ranking of Table 3, despite no constitutional clause or law demanding a high representation of women in any of these countries. Most of the increase in female representation was due to pressure exerted by women within particular parties, as well as the feminist movement in general. Women mobilized and organized themselves to put pressure on political parties to increase the number of female candidates with possibilities of obtaining a seat. This pressure was exerted on all political parties in Scandinavia, some of which responded by applying a system of quotas.

Provided that Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) are famous for exhibiting a high political representation of women, we are going to take these four countries to investigate the results that they would have obtained with the method that we describe below.

4. Legislation and Recommendations about Parity

4.1. European Recommendations from European Union

The European legislation in relation to parity in politics is quite scant and generic, as we can see in the following paragraphs extracted from the Summaries of EU Legislation concerning Equality between Men and Women:

“Equal representation in decision-making:

- Women’s persistent under-representation in civil society, politics and senior management in public administration is a democratic deficit.
- The representation of women in economic decision-making can contribute to innovative and productive work, in particular in relation to flexible working and transparency in promotion processes.
- Member States have set a target of 25% women in leading positions in the field of public sector research.” (Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010).

“Women are under-represented in the decision-making process, both in parliaments and national governments and on management boards of large companies, despite making up half the workforce and more than half of new university graduates in the EU. The Commission will:

- Propose targeted initiatives to improve the situation.
- Monitor progress made towards achieving the 25% target for women in top-level decision-making positions in research.
- Promote an increase in the number of women in committees and expert groups established by the Commission, with the aim of achieving at least 40% female membership.
- Promote greater participation of women in European Parliament elections.” (Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015).

European legislation which specifically regulates parity in politics does not exist yet. Henceforth, each country must provide its own regulations on this issue. Indeed, some countries have no legislation on parity, so the parties themselves freely establish rules to promote female participation in politics. Quite simply, as can be seen from the quoted paragraphs above, the European Union recommends its member states, in a very generic way, to promote the participation of women in politics and public institutions, but without proposing measures or specific, detailed methods on the matter.

4.2. National Legislations

Except in the case of Finland, which does not contemplate the establishment of any kind of quota, the other three countries do contemplate various possibilities of establishing mechanisms based on quotas to achieve parity. Although Denmark currently does not establish any quota, in the past some political parties applied voluntary quotas. Finally, Sweden and Norway contemplate the establishment of voluntary quotas by political parties.

Party gender quotas are adopted voluntarily by parties in order to improve the representation of women. Such quotas may consist of commitments or party statutory

provisions. Across the EU, one or more political parties in 14 Member States, have adopted voluntary quotas. As with legal quotas, voluntary quotas can be a way of ensuring a “fast-track” access of women to parliaments. However, the proportion of women to be nominated usually varies among political parties. For instance, the Green party as well as some left of centre parties in Sweden establish a 50% quota for women on party lists.

4.2.1. Denmark

Currently, Denmark does not include any system of electoral gender quotas legislated by law or regulated in an internal and voluntary way by the parties. Nevertheless, in the past parties internally and voluntarily took some measures in electoral quotas:

- The Socialist People’s Party was the first party to introduce a quota of 40 % in 1977, but it was suppressed in 1996.
- The Left Socialist Party introduced both party and candidate quotas in 1985.
- The Social Democratic Party adopted a party quota of 40 % in 1983, and candidate quotas of 40 % for both sexes for the local elections and regional elections in 1988, but they were eliminated in 1996.

4.2.2. Finland

The case of Finland is the most significant, as it does not have electoral quotas legislated by law or party quotas regulated voluntarily and internally. Even so, as we can see in Table 3, in the last elections held in 2011, 42.50 % of the seats in the Finnish parliament are occupied by women.

Nevertheless, in 1995 the Finnish parliament approved an amendment called Act of Equality between Women and Men (1987) that stipulated a minimum proportion of at least 40 % of both sexes in State committees as well as in the execution and preparation of local or provincial decision-making (counties).

4.2.3. Norway

Like Denmark, parties voluntarily and internally establish gender quotas.

Some voluntary gender quotas are:

- The Socialist Party has had a quota of 40 % for both sexes in the electoral lists since 1975.
- The Labour Party has a quota of 50 % for both sexes in all its electoral lists, and both sexes will be represented in the first two positions. This party used quotas for the first time in 1983.
- The Centre Party establishes a quota of 40 % for both sexes in all elections and candidatures since 1989.
- The Christian People’s Party has a quota of 40 % for both sexes since 1993.

4.2.4. Sweden

In Sweden both left and right parties have been voluntarily introducing different systems of quotas for the elaboration of their lists, mainly from the seventies to the present day. Here we have some leftwing party quota systems:

- The Social Democratic Party is the only party that elaborates its lists with a free zipper list where one sex has alternated with another in the list since 1993. Since 1978 this party has been applying internal quotas.
- The Left Party establishes a minimal quota of 50 % of women in the elaboration of its electoral lists and applies internal quotas since 1978.
- The Green Party establishes a minimum quota of 50 % of women plus or minus 1 person since 1997 and establishes internal quotas since 1981.

Some quota systems of carried out by rightwing parties:

- The Moderate Party. In the elections to the European Parliament in 2009 it carried out a very peculiar quota system whereby 2 women and 2 men go in the first four positions in the list, which are those that may be elected.
- The Liberal Party introduced a policy of a minimum of 40 % of either of the two sexes on the board of directors and committees. In 1984 this recommendation was extended to include alternated lists in general elections where one sex freely alternates with another but without determining if each list has to start with a determined sex.
- The Christian Democratic Party introduced a neutral recommendation of 40 % of gender in the voting in 1987.
- The Conservative Party and The Centre Party both introduced objectives for equitable sex representation in 1993 and 1996 respectively, but they gave the last word to the committees with respect to candidate lists.

Currently the only Swedish party that applies the free zipper system is the Social Democratic Party since 1993. Although as we will see later, the free zipper system does not ensure that approximately 50 % of party seats are held by one sex or another.

The Swedish parliament is unicameral and since 1976 is composed of 349 seats, of which 157 are currently held by women (2010 elections), which means 44'99 %. This figure significantly approaches parity taking into account that there is no legislation to establish gender quotas in party electoral lists.

5. The model of blocked lists for equal representation.

Zipper lists, i. e. those, in which candidates alternate gender, are the most suitable to obtain parity in representation. Obviously, when an even number of seats corresponds to a party in a constituency which has used the zipper list, the result is that half are men and the other half are women. In the case that an uneven number of seats corresponds to the constituency, the difference in seats held by men and women is 1, a figure which is impossible to reduce.

Therefore, there is no better way to organize candidates in an electoral constituency, and guarantee greater equality in gender representation using blocked lists, than the zipper list.

But the zipper list is more advantageous to the gender that heads the list when the number of seats that corresponds to the party is uneven, whereas the gender that does not head, never has any advantage.

Therefore, if a restriction does not exist between the genders that head the lists in the different electoral constituencies, important distortions between genders may arise in the representation of some parties, all the more if parties are medium-small and rarely obtain more than one seat.

For example, if a medium sized party aspires to obtain at most one representative in a series of electoral constituencies, it will normally be in the larger ones, and all its zipper lists are headed by men then 100 % of its elected candidates will be men. Even if part of its zipper lists are headed by women, it is possible that all its elected members are men, because it has used women to head the lists of smaller constituencies or those that even if they were larger, surveys indicated had no possibilities of a seat. This method may lead to small regional parties like IU favouring one sex or another. Specifically, the 6 representatives that IU obtained in the regional elections in 2008 were all men. The result was that, IU being one of the political forces that most defends gender equality in Spain, obtained 6 male members of parliament and none female (López, Ramírez & Ruiz Tarrías, 2010).

To avoid situations like those which we have just described, each party requires to move towards equality in the number of constituencies in which its zipper list starts with each gender. The ideal would be, if the number of constituencies is even, for each party to elaborate half of its lists starting with a man and the other half starting with a woman.

Furthermore, in general there are more possibilities of obtaining a seat in larger constituencies. For example, this happens whenever party support is uniform all over the territory. For this reason, the method we propose starts by:

- a) Classifying electoral constituencies according to size. For example, from larger to smaller.
- b) Each party establishing the gender its list starts with in the largest constituency. Stipulating the rest of the constituencies, following the established order in the previous paragraph a), by alternating gender. That is, the equivalent to a double zipper among candidates from each constituency and among the zipper headings in the different constituencies.

On the other hand, the gender parity, that we attempt to obtain for every political party and therefore globally, can also be required for every electoral constituency. If all political parties decide to head their lists with the same gender in the largest constituency, in some constituencies, one gender will have a greater advantage over the other and in other constituencies, the other way round.

We can also oblige a tendency towards gender parity within each electoral constituency by making half the parties start their lists with one gender and the other half with the other. But, if first we choose those parties that are expected to obtain more votes so that they start their list in the biggest constituencies with a gender, and the remaining parties head their lists with the opposite gender, we guarantee that some specific constituencies are going to have a great imbalance in favour of one gender and others in favour of the opposite.

To avoid this situation we must also classify parties according to the number of votes they hope to obtain e.g. from higher to lower vote percentage in the forthcoming election. Logically this requires previously carrying out a survey to elaborate the electoral lists. Another possibility would be to classify them according to the results of the previous elections, which in general is also going to avoid great distortions in representation within each electoral constituency.

Therefore, the third stage in our method consists of:

- c) Classifying political parties in accordance with their estimated votes e.g, from higher to lower number of expected votes.

Thus, maximum gender impartiality in parliamentary representation would be obtained by drawing lots to determine the gender to head the party list in the largest electoral constituency, which is expected to win the elections. This party would be obliged to alternate gender to head its lists in the rest of the constituencies, from larger to smaller. The second party (according to the number of votes it hopes to obtain) would head the zipper in the largest constituency with the opposite gender to the first party and in the remaining constituencies it would alternate. And so on for the remaining parties.

To summarize, the method we propose is equivalent to a **triple zipper** for gender parity.

Undoubtedly, it means an important loss of power within the parties when establishing what candidates have an advantage when occupying the first positions. The effect, regarding zipper lists without any restriction, focuses exclusively on the cases in which the party obtains an uneven number of members of parliament. Especially in medium and small sized parties which opt to obtain only one seat or none in many constituencies. Their representative in some of the constituencies, in which they obtain one seat, may not correspond with the candidate their party members prefer, because forced alternancy has obliged them to place a candidate of the opposite sex in first place.

6. Application of the proposed method, the triple zipper, to countries with greater presence of women in its parliaments

In order to verify the behaviour of the proposed method, we are going to submit it to the results of the last elections held in four countries with greater presence of women in its parliaments: Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark.

In all cases, to classify the parties required in point c) we suppose that we would have obtained the correct classification.

In order to classify the constituencies, in all cases the number of electors will go from higher to lower. Some countries, such as Sweden, use the number of electors to determine the distribution of the seats among constituencies, and other countries use the number of inhabitants. Using one criterion or another barely has any repercussion on the total distribution according to gender.

For each country we describe in a more detailed way the results of the last election and then we summarize, at least, the results of the last two decades.

6.1. Sweden

6.1.1. 2010 Elections

The total number of votes and seats obtained by the different parties that took part in the Swedish Parliamentary elections in 2010 appear in Table 5.

Table 5. Swedish Parliamentary elections in 2010

Party	Votes	Quota	Seats
Social Democratic Party	1827497	107.01	112
Moderate Party	1791766	104.91	107
Green Party	437435	25.61	25
Liberal Party	420524	24.62	24
Center Party	390804	22.88	23
Sweden Democrats	339610	19.89	20

Left Party	334053	19.56	19
Christian Democratic Party	333696	19.54	19
Others	85023	4.98	0
Total	5960408	349.00	349

We suppose that previous to the electoral process we had estimated that the order of votes was going to be that which appears in this table.

On the other hand, the constituency with the largest number of electors was Stockholm County followed by the Municipality of Stockholm and the Municipality of Göteborgs,..., and Gotlands in last place. We must determine the gender which heads the list of the first party (the Social Democratic Party) in Stockholm County. The most impartial way to do it is by drawing lots.

We suppose that the head of the list for the Social Democratic Party for Stockholm County was determined by drawing lots and turned out to be a Man (M). Thus, the gender of all the candidates in all the lists would be automatically determined. In the case of the Social Democratic Party list in Stockholm County the even positions would be held by women and the uneven ones by men. In the next constituency, the Municipality of Stockholm, the even positions in the Social Democratic Party list would be held by men and the uneven ones by women. In the third constituency, the Municipality of Göteborgs, the list of the Social Democratic Party would have women in the even positions and men in the uneven ones, etc.

According to our estimates, the second party was the Moderate Party. Therefore a woman must head its party list in the constituency of Stockholm County. Analogously the Green Party must head its list in the first constituency with a man, the Liberal Party will start with a woman,... All parties when passing to the second constituency will alternate the gender of the beginning of the list,...

A mistake in the prediction of the total votes of the parties is not serious. Basically, half of the parties that obtain seats head their lists with one gender and the other half with the opposite gender in each constituency approximately.

In accordance with the votes obtained by the parties in the 29 electoral constituencies in Sweden in 2011, the seats each party received in each one of the constituencies appear in Table 6. When a party has received an even number of seats in a constituency, half of these seats correspond to men and the other half to women. Therefore they are equal. When the number is uneven, the gender which headed the list received one more seat than the opposite gender.

For example, the Social Democratic Party in the Municipality of Göteborgs received 5 seats of which 3 are men and 2 are women (given that the list in this constituency was headed by a man). However in the next constituency, in Östergötlands, which also has 5 seats, 3 of them will be held by women and 2 by men (given that in this constituency the list was headed by a woman). When one gender obtains more seats than another, in the Table 6 the letter M or W appears next to the total number of seats, (M) for man or (W) for woman the gender with most representatives in this constituency. So, for example in Stockholm County the Moderate Party obtained 15 seats, which is an uneven number of seats, of which 8 will be held by women and 7 by men. Since there is one more woman than men, a W appears next to the 15.

Table 6. Triple zipper applied to the Swedish parliamentary elections in 2011

Constituency*	Party								
	SDP	MP	GP	LP	CP	SD	LP	CDP	Total

Stockholm County	8	15W	3M	3W	2	2	2	3W	38
Munici. of Stockholm	6	10	3W	3M	2	1M	2	2	29
Municip. of Goteborgs	5M	5W	2	1W	1M	1W	2	1W	18
Ostergotlands	5W	4	1W	1M	1W	1M	1W	1M	15
Skane Lans Sodra	3M	5W	1M	1W	1M	1W	0	1W	13
Vastra Lans Vastra	3W	4	1W	1M	1W	1M	1W	1M	13
Jonkopings	4	3W	1M	1W	1M	1W	0	2	13
Uppsala	3W	4	1W	1M	1W	1M	1W	1M	13
Skane Lans Ostra	3M	4	1M	1W	1M	1W	0	1W	12
Hallands	3W	4	1W	1M	1W	1M	0	1M	12
Gavleborgs	4	3W	1M	1W	1M	1W	1M	0	12
Dalarnas	4	3M	1W	0	1W	1M	1W	0	11
Orebro	4	3W	1M	1W	0	1W	1M	1W	12
Malmo	3W	3M	1W	1M	0	1M	1W	0	10
Skane Lans Vastra	3M	4	1M	1W	0	1W	0	0	10
Varmlands	5W	3M	1W	1M	1W	0	1W	0	12
Vastra Lans Norra	3M	3W	1M	1W	1M	1W	1M	1W	12
Sodermanlands	4	3M	1W	1M	1W	1M	0	0	11
Vasterbottens	4	2	1M	1W	1M	0	1M	1W	11
Vastra Ostra	4	3M	0	1M	1W	0	0	1M	10
Norrbottnens	6	2	0	0	0	0	1M	0	9
Vastmanlands	4	3M	1W	1M	0	1M	1W	0	11
Vasternorrlands	5M	2	0	0	1M	0	1M	0	9
Kalmar	4	3M	0	0	1W	0	0	1M	9
Vastra Sodra	3M	3W	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Kronobergs	3W	2	0	0	1W	0	0	0	6
Blekinge	3M	2	0	0	0	1W	0	0	6
Jamtlands	2	1M	0	0	1W	0	0	0	4
Gotlands	1M	1W	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	112	107	25	24	23	20	19	19	349

The recount of the previous table brings us to the political party results which appear in Table 7.

Table 7. Party results by gender when applying the triple zipper in the Swedish elections in 2010

Party	Men	Women	Total
Social Democratic Party	57	55	112
Moderate Party	53	54	107
Green Party	12	13	25
Liberal Party	12	12	24
Centre Party	10	13	23
Sweden Democrats	10	10	20
Left Party	9	10	19
Christian Democratic Party	9	10	19
Total	172	177	349
%	49,28	50,72	100

So for six of the eight parties, greater parity cannot be reached. Only the Social Democratic Party could have obtained 56 men and 56 women (instead of 57-55) and the Centre Party could have obtained one more man (or two) to increase parity. Globally parliament would have had 172 men and 177 women. If a woman had won the draw to head the Social Democratic Party list in Stockholm County, the result would have been 172 women and 177 men, a parity very close to 50 % for each sex.

In the constituencies a good level of parity has also been obtained. Table 8 contains the results according to gender within each electoral constituency, and we observe that in 22 of the 29 constituencies parity cannot be improved, and in the remaining seven constituencies the maximum possible parity would have been reached if only one of the elected candidates had been of different sex. For example, the maximum disparity occurs in Vasternorrlands that has 9 representatives (6 men and 3 women would have been elected). Thus if the position of one of the elected men had been held by a woman, the result would have been 5 men and 4 women and, evidently, this difference in parity cannot be reduced.

Table 8. Results by gender for the electoral constituencies when applying the triple zipper in the Swedish elections in 2010

Constituency	Men	Women	Total
Stockholm County	18	20	38
Municipality of Stockholm	15	14	29
Municipality of Goteborgs	8	10	18
Ostergotlands	7	8	15
Skane Lans Sodra	6	7	13
Vastra Lans Vastra	6	7	13
Jonkopings	6	7	13
Uppsala	6	7	13
Skane Lansostra	6	6	12
Hallands	6	6	12
Gavleborgs	6	6	12
Dalarnas	5	6	11
Orebro	5	7	12
Malmo	5	5	10
Skane Lans Vastra	5	5	10
Varmlands	5	7	12
Vastra Lans Norra	6	6	12
Sodermanlands	6	5	11
Vasterbottens	6	5	11
Vastra Ostra	6	4	10
Norrbottnens	5	4	9
Vastmanlands	6	5	11
Vasternorrlands	6	3	9
Kalmar	5	4	9
Vastra Sodra	3	3	6
Kronobergs	2	4	6
Blekinge	3	3	6
Jamtlands	2	2	4

Gotlands	1	1	2
Total	172	177	349
%	49,28	50,72	100

As we can observe in previous tables, the result for both sexes is quite balanced both for constituencies and parties and in general.

On the contrary, if it was not decided by drawings lots the constituencies that must head the electoral lists by a specific gender, the parties could wilfully and strategically head their lists with the gender they want to favour in all the constituencies where they expect to obtain an uneven number of seats, and place the opposite gender in the constituencies where they expect to obtain an even number of seats. In such a case, apparently both genders would be compensated in the electoral party list, but in reality one gender has an advantage over the other.

6.1.2. Representation of women with the triple zipper method in several legislatures in Sweden

In Table 9 we compare the real results of women in the Swedish Parliament from 1976 to 2010 with the hypothetical results if the triple zipper list proposal had been applied. The elections in 1976 are taken as starting point because from then on Parliament is composed of 349 members, in contrast to 350 before the elections in 1976.

If we carry out the same procedure for all the elections to the Swedish Parliament held between 1976 and 2010, by supposing that in all cases the Stockholm County list had started with a masculine candidate, and all the lists had complied the triple zipper, the percentage of women elected appears in the last column in Table 9.

We can observe that in all the elections the percentage was very close to 50 %. The maximum variation of absolute parity (50 % men and 50 % women) would have been reached in the 2002 elections in which the percentage would have been 51.58 %.

The percentage of women which were actually elected in each one of these legislatures appears in the central column in the table. Women achieved greatest parity in 2006 when they obtained 47.28 % of the seats.

Table 9. Women in the Swedish Parliament from 1976 to 2010

Election	Real Result		Proposal	
	Women	Percentage	Women	Percentage
1976	79	22,64	174	49,86
1979	92	26,36	171	49,00
1982	96	27,51	177	50,72
1985	104	29,80	176	50,43
1988	133	38,11	173	49,57
1991	117	33,52	174	49,86
1994	141	40,40	177	50,72
1998	149	42,69	173	49,57
2002	158	45,27	180	51,58
2006	165	47,28	174	49,86
2010	157	44,99	177	50,72

Source: Self-Elaboration <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp> and <http://electionresources.org/>

6.2. Norway

6.2.1. Election in 2009 to the Congress of Norway with triple zipper lists

The total number of votes of the political parties that took part in the elections in 2009 in Norway and received seats, appear in Table 10.

Table 10. Elections to the Parliament of Norway in 2009

Party	Votes	Quota	Seats
Labour Party	949049	59,78	64
Progress Party	614717	38,72	41
Conservative Party	462458	29,13	30
Socialist Left Party	166361	10,48	11
Center Party	165006	10,39	11
Christian Democratic Party	148748	9,37	10
Liberal Party	104144	6,56	2
Red Party	36219	2,28	0
Others	36201	2,28	0
Total	2682903	169	169

As in the case of Sweden, we suppose that we know, when the electoral zipper lists were established (that is, before the elections) that the Labour Party would be the most voted, followed by the Progress Party,...

As Oslo is the largest constituency in Norway, the Labour Party list in this constituency was supposed to start with a man to continue alternating with a woman in the even positions. The Progress Party would head its list in Oslo with a woman to continue with a man in the even positions,...

Table 11. Party results by gender if the triple zipper had been applied in Norway in 2009

Party	Men	Women	Total
Labour Party	31	33	64
Progress Party	20	21	41
Conservative Party	15	15	30
Socialist Left Party	6	5	11
Center Party	6	5	11
Christian Democratic Party	5	5	10
Liberal Party	1	1	2
Total	84	85	169
%	49'70	50'30	100

In this case, as shown in Table 11, only the Labour Party could have improved its parity if it had obtained one more man as member of parliament. The six remaining parties would not have obtained more parity with the method proposed. Finally, in general, an increase in parity is not possible, since the result is 85-84.

The results obtained for gender for the 19 electoral constituencies are as shown in Table 12.

Table 12. Gender results for the constituencies if a triple zipper had been applied in Norway in the 2009 elections

Constituency	Men	Women	Total
Oslo	8	9	17
Akershus	8	8	16
Hordaland	8	7	15
Rogaland	6	7	13
Sør-Trøndelag	5	5	10
Østfold	5	4	9
Buskerud	5	4	9
Møre og Romsdal	4	5	9
Nordland	5	5	10
Vestfold	3	4	7
Hedmark	4	4	8
Oppland	3	4	7
Telemark	3	3	6
Vest-Agder	3	3	6
Troms	5	2	7
Nord-Trøndelag	2	4	6
Aust-Agder	2	2	4
Sogn og Fjordane	2	3	5
Finnmark	3	2	5
Total	84	85	169
%	49.70	50.30	100

An appropriate level of parity has also been achieved in the constituencies. We can observe that in 17 of the 19 constituencies parity cannot be improved, and that in the two remaining ones (i.e. Troms and Nord-Trøndelag) the maximum possible parity would have been achieved if only one of the elected candidates had had a different gender, in each constituency. For instance, the maximum disparity occurs in Troms, which has 7 representatives, and 5 men and 2 women would have been elected. Thus, if the seat assigned to one of the elected men had been occupied by a woman, the result would have been 4 men and 3 women, and this difference in parity cannot be decreased.

6.2.2. Women representation with the triple-zipper method in several legislatures in Norway

Table 13 shows, in the last column, the results that would have been obtained in all the elections held for the parliament of Norway between 1989 and 2009, if the lists of candidates had been closed, blocked and with triple zipper (with a man heading the most-voted party list in Oslo).

The size of the Parliament was 165 seats until 2001 and 169 seats in the elections in 2005 and 2009.

Table 13. Women representation when applying the triple-zipper method in the Parliament of Norway from 1989 to 2009

Election	Real result		Triple-zipper method	
	Women	Percentage	Women	Percentage
1989	59	35,76	80	48,48
1993	65	39,39	81	49,09
1997	60	36,36	84	50,91

2001	60	36,36	83	50,30
2005	64	37,87	85	50,30
2009	67	39,64	85	50,30

We observe that the parity achieved was either maximum (i.e. the last three elections) or close to it (i.e. the first three). The maximum gender disparity with the triple-zipper method would have taken place in the 1989 elections, where women (80 versus 85 men) would only have obtained 58.48 % of the seats. The central column summarizes the real percentages of women corresponding to each legislature.

6.3. Finland

6.3.1. 2011 elections to the Congress of Finland with triple-zipper lists

The size of the Finnish Parliament is 200 seats and the total votes of the parties that attended the 2011 election and received seats are shown in Table 14.

Table 14. 2011 elections to the Parliament of Finland

Party	Votes	Quota	Seats
National Coalition	599138	41,48	44
Social Democratic Party	561558	38,88	42
True Finns	560075	38,77	39
Center Party	463266	32,07	35
Left Alliance	239039	16,55	14
Green League	213172	14,76	10
Swedish People's Party	125785	8,71	9
Christian Democrats	118453	8,20	6
Alliance Borgerling	8546	0,59	1
Total	2889032	200	200

There are 15 electoral constituencies. The greatest is Uusimaa, followed by Helsinki, etc (as observed in Table 16).

Therefore, the list of National Coalition in Uusimaa would have men in the uneven positions and women in the even positions. The Social Democratic Party list would have women in the uneven positions and men in the even positions, etc. In the constituency of Helsinki it would be the other way round, etc.

In such a case the gender results for the political parties are shown in Table 15.

Table 15. Party results when applying the triple-zipper method in Finland in 2011

Party	Men	Women	Total
National Coalition	22	22	44
Social Democratic Party	21	21	42
True Finns	18	21	39
Center Party	18	17	35
Left Alliance	9	5	14
Green League	4	6	10
Swedish People's Party	4	5	9
Christian Democrats	2	4	6
Alliance Borgerling	1	0	1

Total	99	101	200
%	49.50	50.50	100

In general just a change in one more seat for men can increase parity, so that each gender would obtain 50 % of the representation. On a party level just the Left Alliance would need two changes in the gender of its representatives to reach maximum parity. In five of the nine parties greater parity is not possible than what was obtained.

Table 16 shows the parity obtained in the constituencies.

Table 16. Gender results for the constituencies in Finland in 2011 when applying the triple-zipper method

Constituency	Men	Women	Total
Uusimaa	18	17	35
Helsinki	10	11	21
Pirkanmaa	9	9	18
Varsinais-Suomi	8	9	17
Oulu	9	9	18
Vaasa	8	9	17
Häme	8	6	14
Kymi	6	6	12
Central Finland	5	5	10
Kuopio	4	5	9
Satakunta	4	5	9
Laponia	3	4	7
Karelia	4	2	6
Mikkeli	2	4	6
Åland	1	0	1
Total	99	101	200
%	49.50	50.50	100

We note that only in the constituencies of Häme, Karelia and Mikkeli a greater level of parity could have been obtained. In the remaining 12 the parity obtained is the maximum.

6.3.2. Women representation with the triple-zipper method between 1985 and 2011 in Finland

In Table 17, the last column shows the percentage of women in Parliament in each legislature if the lists of candidates had been closed, blocked and with triple zipper.

Table 17. Women representation when using triple zipper in the Parliament of Finland from 1995 to 2011

Election	Real result		Triple-zipper method	
	Women	Percentage	Women	Percentage
1991	77	38,50	102	51,00
1995	67	33,50	100	50,00
1999	74	37,00	102	51,00
2003	75	37,50	103	51,50
2007	84	42,00	99	49,50

2011	85	42,50	101	50,50
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Again we note that a great level of parity would have been reached in all the legislatures under analysis. Both genders would have always obtained between 48.5 % and 51.5 % of the seats. Again the central column gathers the real percentages of women in each legislature.

6.4. Denmark

6.4.1. 2011 elections to the Congress of Denmark with triple-zipper lists

Table 18 contains the results obtained by the political parties on the whole in 2011 in Denmark. The number of constituencies is 12 and the largest is Sjælland. Therefore, in this constituency the Liberal Party list would start with a man, the Social Democratic Party list with a woman, etc.

Table 18. 2011 elections to the Parliament of Denmark

Party	Votes	Quota	Seats
Liberal Party	947725	47,46	47
Social Democratic Party	879615	44,05	44
People's Party	436726	21,87	22
Social-Liberal Party	336698	16,86	17
Socialist People's Party	326192	16,34	16
Unity List / Red-Green Alliance	236860	11,86	12
Liberal Alliance	176585	8,84	9
Conservative People's Party	175047	8,77	8
Eskimo Community (Greenland)	9780	0,49	1
Forward (Greenland)	8499	0,43	1
Unionist Party (Faroe Islands)	6362	0,32	1
Social Democratic Party (Faroe Islands)	4332	0,22	1
Total	3544421	179	179

In such a case, the party results would have been those appearing in Table 19.

Table 19. Party results when using triple zipper in Denmark in 2011

Party	Men	Women	Total
Liberal Party	23	24	47
Social Democratic Party	22	22	44
People's Party	11	11	22
Social-Liberal Party	9	8	17
Socialist People's Party	7	9	16
Unity List / Red-Green Alliance	6	6	12
Liberal Alliance	5	4	9
Conservative People's Party	3	5	8
Eskimo Community (Greenland)	0	1	1
Forward (Greenland)	1	0	1
Unionist Party (Faroe Islands)	1	0	1
Social Democratic Party (Faroe Islands)	0	1	1
Total	88	91	179

%	49.16	50.84	100
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Therefore, 9 of the 11 parties would have achieved the maximum possible parity, whereas the Socialist Party, with 7 men and 9 women, would have reached the maximum parity if one more man had obtained a seat at the cost of a woman, and analogous for the People's Party.

The results with regard to gender distribution in electoral constituencies appear in Table 20.

Table 20. Gender representation in constituencies in Denmark when using triple zipper in 2011

Constituency	Men	Women	Total
Sjælland	13	13	26
Østjylland	13	12	25
Sydjylland	11	12	23
Municipality of Copenhagen	10	9	19
Nordjylland	9	10	19
Vestjylland	8	8	16
Fyn	7	10	17
Copenhagen County	7	8	15
Nordsjælland	7	6	13
Greenland	1	1	2
Faroe Islands	1	1	2
Bornholm	1	1	2
Total	88	91	179
%	49.16	50.84	100

As observed, the maximum parity was reached in all the constituencies, except in Fyn.

6.4.2. Women representation with the triple-zipper method between 1990 and 2011 in Denmark

In Table 21, the last column shows the percentage of women in parliament in each legislature if the lists of candidates had been closed, blocked and with triple zipper.

Table 21. Women representation in the Parliament of Denmark from 1990 to 2011

Election	Real result		Triple zipper method	
	Women	Percentage	Women	Percentage
1990	59	32,96	90	50,28
1994	60	33,52	90	50,28
1998	67	37,43	90	50,28
2001	68	37,99	92	51,40
2005	68	37,99	89	49,72
2007	67	37,43	89	49,72
2011	70	39,11	91	50,84

In five of the 7 elections analyzed, the maximum parity would have been reached (90 seats for one gender and 89 for the other). In 2001 if only two members of parliament had been of a different gender, maximum parity would have been obtained.

7. Reduction of the established restrictions in the model

We are aware that our alternative zipper list method has a disadvantage in that, when determining the head of the list, some small parties would be at a disadvantage with respect to the major parties when obtaining leader representation or the candidate for president. Whereas the largest parties can place him/her as head of list almost in any constituencies that start with the gender of their leader, the same thing does not happen with the leaders of the smallest parties that aim to obtain 1 seat in very few constituencies. Sometimes, the only possibility to obtain seats for these small parties is in large constituencies such as the capital cities or in other very important constituencies. Given this situation, the most reasonable option would be to include an exception according to which any party could choose a constituency to start it with the preferred gender.

8. Conclusions

Parity has received increasing attention due to the large amount of legislation that has emerged in the last two decades and the low percentage of women who are in some parliaments.

There is great controversy about implementing gender quotas aimed at ensuring a more equitable representation of women in parliaments. Two of the most commonly used mechanisms are legislative and voluntary party quotas.

Previous studies suggest that national quota laws tend to be more effective than political party quota rules. Firstly, they apply to all parties, not a select few. Secondly, officials or judiciaries enforce quota laws, whereas party leaders enforce internal party quota rules (Dahlerup and Friedenvall, 2008).

According to official data, those countries whose parliaments exhibit a more egalitarian gender representation have either no quota or voluntary party quotas that seem to work to a great extent. Nonetheless, in this paper we propose a modified type of gender quota that, implemented at national level and, thus, across all the political parties, yields an almost fully equitable representation for women in parliaments. We empirically tested this proposed quota in the elections held in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland.

The proposed method presents several advantages aimed at improving gender representation. Firstly, it is important to highlight the increase in gender parity with respect to that obtained in the last elections across the 4 countries analyzed. Secondly, we point out that it is possible to make the model more flexible and to simultaneously obtain greater parity.

On the contrary, if the zipper lists were not chosen randomly, parties may deliberately and strategically initiate the lists with the gender they wish to favour in all the constituencies where they expect to obtain an even number of seats, and with the opposite gender in the constituencies where they expect to obtain an uneven number of seats. Only in appearance would both genders be offset in number within the electoral party list, but in reality one gender would have more possibilities of obtaining a seat if the parties strategically chose the order of the gender to coincide with even or uneven positions in the party list.

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