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Women in Local Politics: A Case Study of Poznań and the Wielkopolska Regional Assembly, 2018–2022

Abstract: The purpose of the study was to examine the participation of women in local government and local politics in the city of Poznań. The study used the method of quantitative analysis that focused on actions taken by female councilors of the City of Poznań and the Wielkopolska Province, including their interpellations and inquiries, and functions held by women in the two local governments. Moreover, the analysis covered political role indicators used in the study by the European Charter on Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. The study considered the period from the beginning of the current local government term (November 2018) to December 31, 2022. It also utilized data published in the Public Information Bulletins of the City of Poznań and the Local Government of the Wielkopolska Province.

Key words: equality between women and men, local government, local politics, Poznań, Wielkopolska

Research and literature on women's activism in local government and politics have expanded significantly in recent years. This is attributable not only to the increasing participation of women in public life but also to the growing importance of such research. Given the focus of this article, it primarily references the studies pertaining to the situation in Poland. Research indicates a growing acceptance in Poland for women assuming public roles (Budrowska et al., 2003; Fuszara, 2006; Siemińska, 2011). However, the level of interest in public affairs, including politics, still shows variations between women and men (Cybulska, 2013; Kajta et al., 2023). Researchers have addressed various issues concerning women in politics, including their roles within the political arena (Musiał-Karg, Secler, 2010; Banaś, 2020); their participation in elections (Żukowski, 2011; Fuszara, 2013; Stelmach, 2013; Tomczak, Zawadzka-Witt, 2020); and barriers to their political involvement (Siemińska, 2005). Studies

have also explored perceptions of mechanisms to boost women's political participation (Musiał-Karg, 2014); their representation in political party strategies (Druciarek et al., 2019), the impact of the quota system (Wawrowski, 2010), factors determining women's candidacy for executive roles in local government (Bartnicki, 2023), responsibilities of women in specific functions, such as village leaders (Wojcieszak-Zbierska, 2020) and their roles in specific local governments, e.g. in Rzeszów (Niewiadomska-Cudak, 2020). In contrast, women's involvement in local government and politics within the city of Poznań has not yet been extensively studied.

The aim of this study was to examine the participation of women in local government bodies and politics in the City of Poznań. The methodology involved a quantitative analysis of the initiatives undertaken by female councillors in the City of Poznań and the Wielkopolskie Province, focusing on their interpellations, enquiries, and the roles they hold in the two governing bodies. Additionally, the study analysed political role indicators used for diagnosing adherence to the European Charter on Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. The study spans from the start of the current local government term in November 2018 to 31 December 2022. It utilises data published in the Public Information Bulletins of the City of Poznań and the Local Government of the Wielkopolska Province.

Interpellations and questions

The sole personalized activity of councillors systematically documented and made public are the interpellations and questions they submit. In Poland, a prevalent practice has emerged where this tool is primarily utilized by councillors in opposition. The dynamics of opposition vary between the municipal/county level and the province level. In provincial government, opposition is formalized through councillor clubs, which are required to make declarations of support for or refusal to support the provincial board. This procedure is outlined in Article 23(3a) of the Act on Provincial Self-Government: "Following the formation of a councillors' club and the election of the provincial board, the club must promptly submit a declaration of support or refusal to support the provincial board to the chairman of the assembly." The declaration of the club mentioned in the initial sentence, as well as any amendments to it, are mandated to be publicly disclosed (Ustawa,

2022). Among the provincial councillors surveyed, the opposition was represented by 3 female and 10 male councillors.

The number of questions and interpellations submitted by individual provincial councillors is determined by a well-established custom, as these are not typically submitted by councillors who are also members of the provincial board. Since the marshal or a designated person responds to interpellations, councillors who are members of the provincial board would therefore address their questions to their 'political' superior. There are no formal obstacles preventing councillors who are also members of the provincial board from submitting an interpellation addressed to their superior, but in practice, they do not do so. During the current term in Wielkopolska, two female councillors and three male councillors have been appointed as marshal, deputy marshal, and members of the board.

In the context of the Poznań City Council, the opposition to or support for the mayor takes on a different dimension. This is because the mayor is directly elected, and councillors do not necessarily have to explicitly align themselves 'for' or 'against' the mayor. Another distinction from the provincial assembly is that a councillor's mandate cannot be combined with the role of deputy mayor. Therefore, there is not even a theoretical risk of formally addressing questions to one's 'political' superior.

Table 1

Interpellations and questions from councillors in the Wielkopolska Regional Assembly (from 23.11.2018 to 31.12.2022)

No.	Councillor	Interpellations and questions
1	2	3
1.	Marta Dzikowska	2
2.	Agnieszka Grzechowiak (mandate from 28.10.2019)	14
3.	Zofia Itman	48
4.	Krystyna Kubicka-Sztul (mandate from 28.10.2019)	11
5.	Ewa Panowicz	32
6.	Patrycja Przybylska	1
7.	Mirosława Rutkowska-Krupka	11
8.	Tatiana Sokolowska	0
9.	Paulina Stochniałek (Member of the Management Board from 13.07.2020)	0
10.	Małgorzata Stryjska	3
11.	Zofia Szalczyk	13
12.	Małgorzata Waszak-Klepka	2

1	2	3
13.	Marzena Wodzińska (Member of the Management Board until 2.07.2020)	6
14.	Łucja Zielińska	12
	Average	11,07
	Joanna Jaškowiak (from 23.11.2018 to 28.10.2019)	0
	The late Joanna Król-Trąbka (from 23.11.2018 to 29.04.2022)	4
	Marlena Małag (from 23.11.2018 to 28.10.2019)	0

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Public Information Bulletin of the Wielkopolska Regional Government, www.bip.umww.pl.

The calculation of average figures involved 14 councillors who held office as of 31 December 2022. When considering only opposition councillors, the average number of submitted interpellations and queries for them is 21. The average for male councillors is 15.04, while the average for all councillors is 13.61. Notably, the results are notably influenced by the interpellations and queries submitted by two opposition councillors: Adam Bogrycewicz (115) and Marek Sowa (61). Their contributions elevate the average for male councillors in opposition to 26.3.

Councillors of the City of Poznań pose more questions and interpellations compared to councillors of the Wielkopolskie Province. However, simultaneously, the disparity between the number of questions and interpellations submitted by women and men is larger in the Poznań City Council than in the Wielkopolskie Regional Assembly.

Table 2

Interpellations and questions asked by councillors in the Poznań City Council (from 19.11.2018 to 31.12.2022)

No.	Councillor	Interpellations	Questions	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Dorota Bonk-Hammermeister	45	8	53
2.	Monika Danelska	18	0	18
3.	Lidia Dudziak	81	2	83
4.	Małgorzata Dudzic-Biskupska	17	2	19
5.	Ewa Jemielity	14	20	34
6.	Dominika Urszula Król	1	1	2
7.	Agnieszka Lewandowska	17	1	18
8.	Maria Lisiecka-Pawelczak	30	0	30
9.	Marta Mazurek	3	1	4
10.	Halina Owsiana	68	7	75

1	2	3	4	5
11.	Klaudia Strzelecka	37	16	53
12.	Sara Szynkowska vel Sęk	16	2	18
13.	Anna Wilczewska	21	1	22
14.	Małgorzata Woźniak	19	1	20
	Average	23.64	4.14	27.78

Source: Own elaboration based on data from City of Poznań Public Information Bulletin, www.bip.poznan.pl.

The average total of submitted interpellations and questions for male councillors is 60.35, whereas the average for all councillors is 46.94. Much like in the Regional Assembly (*Sejmik*), these figures are notably influenced by the interpellations and questions submitted by two councillors: Łukasz Kapustka (283) and Andrzej Rataj (212). As opposition is not formalised within the city council, the average for opposition councillors cannot be calculated.

Functions in decision-making bodies and committees

The second type of information made available to the public is data on the functions held by councillors in governing bodies and committees. All councillors of the Wielkopolskie Province currently in office (as of December 31, 2022) have held or are holding elected positions on the Provincial Board, the Regional Assembly, or standing committees.

Table 3

Functions of the councillors of the Wielkopolska Province

No.	Councillor	Function
1	2	3
1.	Marta Dzikowska	Chair of the Committee of Economic Affairs
2.	Agnieszka Grzechowiak	Vice-Chair of the Regional Assembly
3.	Zofia Itman	Vice-Chair of the Committee of Complaints, Petitions and Motions
4.	Krystyna Kubicka-Sztul	Chair of the Committee of Physical Culture and Tourism
5.	Ewa Panowicz	Chair of the Committee of Complaints, Petitions and Motions
6.	Patrycja Przybylska	Vice-Chair of the Committee of Family and Social Policy
7.	Mirosława Rutkowska-Krupka	Chair of the Committee of Spatial Planning and Technical Infrastructure, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Budget

1	2	3
8.	Tatiana Sokolowska	Chair of the Committee of Health and Public Safety, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Physical Culture and Tourism, Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee
9.	Paulina Stochniałek	Chair of the Committee of Education and Science until 13.07.2020, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Family and Social Policy until 13.07.2020, Member of the Provincial Board from 13.07.2020
10.	Małgorzata Stryjska	Vice-Chair of the Committee of Health and Public Safety
11.	Zofia Szalczyk	Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Environment and Water Management, Vice-Chair of the Election Committee for the Election of Councillors to the Youth Regional Assembly of the First Term of Office
12.	Małgorzata Waszak-Klepka	Vice-Chair of the Regional Assembly from 23.11.2018 to 25.11.2019, Chair of the Regional Assembly from 25.11.2019
13.	Marzena Wodzińska	Member of the Provincial Board from 23.11.2018 to 02.07.2020
14.	Łucja Zielińska	Vice-Chair of the Commission for Spatial Planning and Technical Infrastructure

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the Public Information Bulletin of the Wielkopolska Regional Government, www.bip.umww.pl.

Among the three councillors who are no longer in office during the current term, only one has not held any position in the assembly.

- Joanna Król-Trąbka¹ from 23.11.2018 to 29.04.2022, Chair of the Committee of Regional Development Strategy and International Cooperation;
- Joanna Jaškowiak² from 23.11.2018 to 28.10.2019, Vice-chair of the Culture Committee;
- Marlena Małąg³ from 23.11.2018 to 28.10.2019.

In comparison, among the current male councillors, seven have neither held nor currently hold any office.

Nearly all city councillors in Poznań, with the exception of Klaudia Strzelecka, hold some form of office. An important distinction from the local council is that, in the case of the city council, it is not possible to combine the role of a councillor with that of deputy mayor.

¹ Joanna King-Trump died on 29 April 2022.

² She took up her seat as a Member of the Polish Parliament.

³ She took up her seat as a Member of the Polish Parliament.

Table 4

Functions held by Poznań City Councillors

No.	Councillors	Function
1.	Dorota Bonk-Hammermeister	Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee, Vice-Chair of the Commission for the Spatial Study of the City of Poznań
2.	Monika Danelska	Chair of the Local Cooperation Committee, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Complaints, Petitions and Motions, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Security and Public Order
3.	Lidia Dudziak	Vice-Chair of the Committee of Security and Public Order
4.	Małgorzata Dudzic-Biskupska	Chair of the Committee of Budget, Finance, Enterprise and Corporate Governance, Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee
5.	Ewa Jemieliety	Chair of the Audit Committee, Vice-Chair of the Committee of Family, Social Policy and Health
6.	Dominika Urszula Król	Vice-Chair of the Poznan City Council, Vice-Chair of the Committee for Environmental Protection and Public Utilities
7.	Agnieszka Lewandowska	Vice-President of the Poznan City Council
8.	Maria Lisiecka-Pawelczak	Chair of the Committee of Family, Social Policy and Health
9.	Marta Mazurek	Vice-Chair of the Committee of Education and Training
10.	Halina Owsiana	Vice-Chair of the Committee of Family, Social Policy and Health
11.	Klaudia Strzelecka	—
12.	Sara Szykowska vel Sęk	Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Environment and the Economy
13.	Anna Wilczewska	Vice-Chair of the Committee of Transport and Housing Policy
14.	Małgorzata Woźniak	Chair of the Committee of Complaints, Petitions and Motions

Source: Own elaboration based on data from City of Poznań Public Information Bulletin, www.bip.poznan.pl.

The roles held by women do not notably distinguish them, as every male councillor also holds a position within the bodies of the Poznań City Council. However, the significance of various roles can vary. For instance, vice-chairs of committees lack independent authority; they can only lead discussions or represent the committee when the chairperson is absent or upon their request. In this context, it can be argued that female

councillors of the *Sejmik* have held more significant roles as they chair seven committees and, most importantly, they occupy leading positions in the *Sejmik*. Female councillors of the City of Poznań oversee the operation of five committees. In contrast, provincial female councillors chair a larger number of committees, which some councillors consider to be more prestigious, such as the Spatial Planning and Technical Infrastructure, Regional Development Strategy and International Cooperation, and the Economic Committee. Notably, within the Poznań City Council, the only committee of such nature chaired by a woman is the Committee of Budget, Finance, Entrepreneurship, and Corporate Governance.

Executive bodies hold a significant sway in Polish local government. The term “local government official” often refers exclusively to representatives of executive bodies such as marshals, heads of counties, presidents, mayors, and village leaders. One example highlighting this trend can be found in the publication by Marek Miros entitled “Ludzie polskiego samorządu – województwo wielkopolskie. Trzydziestolecie restytucji polskiego samorządu terytorialnego 1990–2020” (People of Polish Self-Government – Wielkopolskie Province. Thirty Years of restored Polish local government 1990–2020) (Miros, 2020).⁴ The essential part of the publication focuses on conversations with multi-term mayors and city presidents in the Wielkopolskie Province, comprising interviews with 57 local government officials. Given the prominence of executive bodies in local politics, it is logical to examine women’s involvement in the highest-ranking executive bodies. The aforementioned publication by M. Miros has focused on three women only. However, it is essential to recognise that women’s participation in local government executive bodies is relevant for all residents. Some studies indicate that “an increase in women’s participation in local government increases transparency. When acting in executive bodies, women are more likely than men to actively involve residents in decision-making and are less likely to engage in unethical behaviour in the workplace for financial gain and therefore better promote transparency” (Jastrzębska, 2022, p. 20).

The dominance of the executive body is especially pronounced at the municipal level, where “...a single-member directly elected body holds dominant power. The change made in 2002 meant that the role of the municipal council was largely marginalised” (Antkowiak, Scheffs, 2016,

⁴ The publication was financed from the Local Government of the Wielkopolska Province.

pp. 57–58.). Hence, the power system at the municipal level is occasionally labelled as ‘presidential’. The focal point of local politics is municipal rather than provincial government. This is attributable to both objective factors, as the municipal budget significantly outweighs the provincial budget, and decisions crucial for residents are predominantly made at the municipal and county levels. Moreover, there are certain subjective factors, such as stronger mass media focus. In the context of provincial government, the situation is further complicated by the low level of civic knowledge among inhabitants and their lack of awareness regarding the tasks and powers at the provincial level, including those of the governor and his office. Consequently, the attention of the local community focuses on municipal politics and its actors. Therefore, the further part of the article begins with the analysis of women participation in executive bodies of the city of Poznań.

Participation of women in executive bodies

It is noteworthy that currently, there are no women in the executive positions of the City of Poznań, including the mayor and his deputies. This absence is particularly surprising considering that during the 2014 election campaign, Mayor Jacek Jaśkowiak was the first candidate to publicly declare that there would be a woman among his deputies. He committed to the demands of the Wielkopolska Women’s Congress, the first of which stipulated: “One deputy mayor position should be held by a woman.” This pledge came to fruition on 9 February 2015, when the president appointed Agnieszka Pachciarz (non-partisan) as his second deputy. On 10 August of the same year, she was dismissed and until the end of his first term (in 2018), President Jaśkowiak did not appoint any woman as his deputy. Paradoxically, President Jaśkowiak continued to advocate for women’s participation in politics. At the 4th Wielkopolska Women’s Congress on 7 April 2018, he stated: “If women do not engage in politics, they will not see their demands fulfilled” (Haloszka, 2018).

At the beginning of the reviewed period (2018–2022) during J. Jaśkowiak’s second term, the fourth deputy mayor was Katarzyna Kierzek-Koperska (Nowoczesna). She secured a seat on the Poznań City Council from the Civic Coalition list and garnered support from the Women’s Congress (Zawadzka, 2019, p. 32). On 13 July 2020, the mayor dismissed her from the post. The reasons for the decision were not clearly

stated. On one hand, a spokesperson explained that the reason for the dismissal was the “loss of confidence”. On the other hand, the spokesperson claimed that “the mayor cannot continue to work with such a person, as he requires full commitment and certain competences from his colleagues” (following: *Prezydent Poznania...*, 2020). Moreover, the president himself accused his deputy saying: “She hides behind her gender, thus trying to cover up her lack of competence” (after: Nyczka, 2020b). The actual reasons may have differed, as local politicians anonymously suggested in the media. “They juggled quite freely with the range of responsibilities she was to assume in the office,” they explained. There were also reports indicating that K. Kierzek-Koperska was not free to choose her subordinates (Dąbkowski, 2020a).

The awkwardness of the situation was exacerbated by claims from some media that the decision to dismiss was coordinated with MP Adam Szłapka, the head of the party to which the deputy president belonged (Nyczka, 2020a). In public perception, it seemed that the two politicians had privately reached an agreement regarding the future of the politician in question. Following this discussion, the national authorities of Nowoczesna dismissed K. Kierzek-Koperska from her position as chairwoman of the Wielkopolska region and placed the region under receivership. Additionally, the Poznań circle of Nowoczesna withdrew their recommendation for her to serve as deputy mayor. Some comments following K. Kierzek-Koperska’s dismissal were unfavourable toward the president. For instance, Aleksandra Przybylska wrote: “The case of the dismissal of Deputy Mayor Katarzyna Kierzek-Koperska shows that Mayor Jacek Jaśkowiak does not afford his colleagues even a moment of weakness. Or he does, but not to everyone.” (Przybylska, 2020). The criticism surrounding the dismissal of the deputy and the manner in which it was executed (via SMS) did not alter Mayor Jacek Jaśkowiak’s approach toward his colleagues and co-workers. In April 2022, despite protests, he dismissed Magdalena Górka from her position as the Mayor of Poznań’s Plenipotentiary for Tenant Affairs.

According to the spokesperson’s announcements, the successor to K. Kierzek-Koperska is expected to be appointed late this year. Other women such as Beata Kocięcka, Director of the Ownership Supervision Office (City of Poznań), and Iwona Matuszczak-Szulc, Director of the City Development and International Cooperation Department (City of Poznań), have also been mentioned informally as potential candidates. However, as of 2 April 2023, the appointment of a fourth deputy has not

yet taken place. In his interpellation of 11 August 2021, Councillor Paweł Sowa (Common Poznań) asked, “Since the City of Poznań wanted to adopt the Equality Charter, does the City of Poznań apply the principle of balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process when appointing deputy mayors (i.e. with three or four deputies at least one woman or one man)?” (*Interpelacja...*, 2021). In response to the interpellation, Stanisław Tamm, City Secretary, stated, “When making decisions concerning official positions, especially those that are crucial for the City, the Mayor is guided primarily by the competence of the person to be appointed. During Mr Jacek Jaśkowiak’s term, the position of Deputy Mayor has twice been entrusted to women, including Ms Agnieszka Pachciarz and Ms Katarzyna Kierzek-Koperska. Currently, the Mayor does not see the need to appoint a fourth Deputy Mayor, and instead, the tasks have been distributed among the three Deputy Mayors and the Secretary of the City.” (*Interpelacja...*, 2021). Some observers associated such reasoning regarding these specific women with the phenomenon known as the ‘glass cliff,’ wherein women are promoted to positions with tasks that carry a high risk of almost certain failure (Krzyżanowska, 2013, p. 177).

The second demand of the 2014 Wielkopolska Congress of Women (WCW), approved by J. Jaśkowiak, involved the appointment of a mayor’s plenipotentiary for gender equality. The WCW also outlined the precise scope of competences for the Plenipotentiary, modelled on Plenipotentiary’s competences in the City of Łódź. In 2016, the mayor implemented this demand by appointing Marta Mazurek as the mayor’s Plenipotentiary for Preventing Exclusion. The decision did not prove to be permanent, as M. Mazurek was elected as a councillor in the 2018 and had to resign from her position of Plenipotentiary. In April 2019, Stella Gołębiewska became the plenipotentiary for gender equality to be replaced by Agnieszka Zawadzka in April 2022.

Barbara Sajnaj, City Treasurer since 1999, retired on 30 September 2021. From a chronological standpoint, she was the last woman in the top management of Poznań City Hall. She was succeeded by her deputy, Piotr Husejko, who also served as the director of the Budget and Controlling Department of the Poznań City Hall. The position of city treasurer has never been a political one in Poznań, but rather a crucial civil service role. Its significance stemmed from the treasurer’s influence on budgetary matters and long-term financial forecasts. The absence of women in the Poznań executive body stands in contrast to the city’s commitment as a signatory to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in

Local Life. One of the principles outlined by the Charter emphasizes that “balanced participation of women and men in decision-making is a prerequisite for a democratic society” (*Europejska Karta...*, 2006). The document further elucidates the responsibilities of local authorities: “The right to equality between women and men requires that local and regional authorities take all the appropriate measures and adopt all appropriate strategies to promote a balanced representation and participation of women and men in all spheres of decision-making.” (*Europejska Karta...*, 2006).

Indicators of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life

The two primary indicators used to diagnose the political role of women as part of the Charter are: “the representation of women and men at elected positions in local government (city councillors)” and “the representation of women and men at appointed political positions in local government (deputy mayors, secretary, treasurer, heads of management boards).” (*Karta...*, 2020). According to the diagnosis annexed to the resolution of the City Council of 11 February 2020, which adopted the Charter...,⁵ the first indicator for 2019 was:

- City Council 41.17% women,
- deputy mayors, secretary, and treasurer 33.3% (K. Kierzek-Koperska and B. Sajnaj),
- heads of municipal companies 27.97% women.

In 2022 (at 31 December), these ratios were as follows:

- City Council 41.17% (unchanged),
- deputy mayors, secretary, and treasurer 0%,
- heads of municipal companies 21.05%.⁶

The results of the city council elections, particularly in terms of female participation, were highly commendable. Across the state, women secured 26.8% of seats on city councils of cities with county status, including Poznań (Druciarek et al., 2019, p. 44). In city councils of cities with county status in Wielkopolska, the proportion of women was slightly higher than the national average, standing at 29.1% (Druciarek et al., 2019, p. 51). In contrast, the representation of women in the city

⁵ The resolution itself is not in force. It has been successfully challenged in an administrative procedure.

⁶ 15 male and 4 female presidents of board.

executive during the current term of office has dropped to zero, and in municipal companies, it has decreased by almost a quarter.

On 11 October 2021, a ceremony for the signing of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life took place in Poznań, attended by representatives and female delegates from 16 Polish cities. The event was organised by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Association of Polish Cities. The Charter was ultimately adopted by Mayor Jacek Jaśkowiak, rather than by the City Council.

At the level of the provincial authorities, women have stronger representation than in the City of Poznań. The respective female participation rates are as follows:

- Sejmik – at the beginning of the term 38.46%,
on 31 December 2022 35.89%,
- board, treasurer, and secretary 28.57%,
- presidents of provincial companies 23.08%.⁷

Wielkopolska had the highest number of voters (nationwide) to cast their votes for women in the 2018 election (42.9%). Nationwide, women won 28.8 per cent of seats in provincial assemblies. This was a better result than in the previous elections of 2010 and 2014 – the seats obtained by women represented 22.6% and 23.1%, respectively (Druciarek et al., 2019, p. 7). At the beginning of the term, the Sejmik of the Wielkopolskie Province had the second highest percentage of women among councillors, after the Łódzkie Province with 42.4% (Druciarek et al., 2019, p. 49).

Women endure longer in the provincial authorities compared to those in Poznań. However, there were some disruptions, particularly within the provincial board. At the commencement of the term on 23 November 2018, at the request of Marshal Marek Woźniak, the Sejmik elected councillor Marzena Wodzińska (Civic Platform) as a board member. In June 2020, the Marshal submitted a motion to dismiss Ms Wodzińska, but she eventually resigned from her position. Finally, on 29 June, the Sejmik accepted the resignation with effect from 2 July.

In his speeches, the Marshal remained restrained in his assessment of the outgoing board member. Neither the reasons for her resignation nor the reasons for her planned dismissal were made public. However, the process of selecting a successor as a member of the Management Board

⁷ 10 male and 3 female presidents of board. One company had a vacancy in the position of its president on 31 December 2022.

was swift and efficient. Pursuant to Article 40(3) of the Act on Provincial Self-Government, in the event of the resignation of a board member who is not the chairman of the board, the provincial marshal is obliged to present a new candidate to the Sejmik within one month of accepting the resignation. On July 13, 2020, at the request of the Marshal, the Sejmik appointed M. Wodzińska's successor, councillor Paulina Stochniałek, who switched from Nowoczesna to Civic Platform. The reasons for the party change were tied to the participation of women in local politics: "She left the party due to her dissatisfaction with the leadership style of MP Adam Szłapka, citing his failure to support Katarzyna Kierzek-Koperska, the deputy mayor of Poznań representing Nowoczesna, in her dispute with Mayor of Poznań Jacek Jaśkowiak" (Dąbkowski, 2020b).

The legislative initiative of councillors and the importance of female deputies

An important aspect of councillors' work is their legislative activity. However, analysing councillors' legislative initiatives is considerably more challenging than examining the functions they fulfil or interpellations and questions they raise. This is primarily due to the lack of clear records in the public registers pertaining to resolutions adopted by the constituent bodies. Typically, such registers do not identify initiators of resolutions. In the majority of cases, such initiatives originate from the executive bodies, such as the mayor of the city or the provincial board. This also applies to initiatives submitted by councillors, councillor clubs, or committees, and are widely and publicly discussed. For instance, Resolution No. LII/976/VIII/2021 of the Poznań City Council of 28 September 2021 regarding the naming of an avenue after Women's Rights. The said resolution (Uchwała..., 2021), published in the Public Information Bulletin, contains neither justification nor information on about its initiators. The sole source of information regarding the initiators were media reports, identifying councillors Marta Mazurek, Dominika Król, Maria Lisiecka-Pawelczak, Monika Danelska, and Małgorzata Woźniak as the individuals behind the resolution (Łada, 2022).

The initiative outlined above was not subject to debate regarding its authorship; however, the lack of adequate information in public databases may lead to contention in other cases. This issue is not exclusive to women but affects all councillors, both in the Poznań City Council and

the Wielkopolska Regional Assembly. Some of the initiatives put forth by councillors receive no media coverage whatsoever. Consequently, the challenge lies in the inability to precisely identify those resolutions that have been proposed by councillors. Furthermore, the executive authorities do not actively encourage councillors to initiate resolutions. In instances involving groups that are part of or support the executive body, the parent political grouping does not actively promote councillors to put forward a legislative proposal either. Occasionally, to enhance the likelihood of a particular draft being adopted, councillors' initiatives are not formally filed with the president of the city council or the Sejmik, but rather informally submitted to the mayor or the marshal, respectively. Then, they can be (and sometimes are) submitted as a draft put forward by the mayor or the provincial board.

Another group of women exerting influence on local politics consists of female politicians whose scope of action extends beyond local government and politics. This group cannot be solely assessed using the same indicators as the participation of councillors, as they hold a separate mandate to engage with local politics. These women include parliamentarians such as MPs, senators, and MEPs, elected in constituencies covering the city of Poznań. These include such MPs as Jadwiga Emilewicz (United Right), Katarzyna Kretkowska (Left) and Katarzyna Ueberhan (Left), Senator Jadwiga Rotnicka (Civic Platform) and MEPs Ewa Kopacz (Civic Platform, European People's Party – EPP) and Sylwia Spurek (non-partisan, Greens). Local politics may not be their primary focus, although it holds significance in shaping electoral lists and influencing the voting decisions of certain constituents. While the engagement of female MPs from the Sejm and Senate is noticeable at the local level, female MEPs, despite having parliamentary offices in Poznań, infrequently visit and rarely address local issues. The limited engagement at the local level is evidenced by an examination of the content on MEPs' websites and their social media profiles. One contributing factor to this is that both MEPs lack personal or political ties to the constituency in which they were elected.

Conclusion

Quantitative research indicates that female councillors in the City of Poznań submit more queries and interpellations compared to their counterparts in the Sejmik of the Wielkopolskie Province. Moreover, the dis-

parity between the number of queries and interpellations submitted by women and men is more pronounced in the City Council than in the Sejmik. Across both constituent bodies, women submit fewer interpellations and queries than men. However, in the Sejmik, women are more inclined to serve on internal bodies than men, whereas no significant difference exists between genders in the City Council in this regard. Additionally, in the Sejmik, women are more likely than in the City Council to chair committees considered by some councillors prestigious. During the period under examination (2018–2022), there was a consistent representation of women in the executive bodies of the province, contrasted with a notable decline in the City of Poznań. Some observers attribute this trend to the “glass cliff” phenomenon.

The role of mayor in Poznań holds significant political influence, a fact underscored by female politicians grappling with the challenge of promoting and implementing the concept of women’s participation among deputy mayors. This issue could either be resolved or re-evaluated if a woman assumed the position of mayor. Speculation regarding potential future candidates is fuelled by Mayor J. Jaśkowiak’s steadfast commitment to his pledge of governing for a maximum of two terms, thus concluding his tenure by the end of the current local government term. Potential candidates for the mayor of Poznań in the 2024 local election include female councillors, MPs, and the former deputy mayor of Poznań. These are:

- D. Bonk-Hammermaister (Common Poznań),
- M. Dudzic-Biskupska (Civic Platform),
- J. Emilewicz (United Right),
- K. Kierzek-Koperska (Civic Platform),
- K. Kretkowska (Left),
- A. Lewandowska (Poland 2050),
- K. Ueberhan (Left) (Nyczka, 2022; Sałwacka et al, 2023; Nyczka, 2023a).

Women have the potential to significantly expand their role in Poznań politics compared to the period of 2018–2022. A symbolic milestone highlighting the presence of women in politics occurred during the 2019 parliamentary elections when the leaders of three Poznań lists for the Sejm were women: J. Emilewicz (Law and Justice, representing Jarosław Gowin’s Agreement at the time), J. Jaśkowiak (Civic Platform, non-partisan), and K. Ueberhan (Left, representing Robert Biedron’s Spring at that time). Their election to these seats was not solely attributed to their

personal political influence but rather resulted from centrally decided coalition and factional arrangements. The formation of the electoral lists in Poznań reflects the underlying weakness of the local structures within the political parties concerned (Law and Justice, Left, and Civic Platform). The analysis of the past successes and setbacks of female politicians could offer valuable insights for enhancing the political footprint women have at the local level. An intriguing area of research would involve investigating reasons why some female politicians who previously held significant roles in Poznań's local politics (and beyond) have opted to step back from political engagement. This could shed light on factors influencing their decisions and contribute to strategies aimed at retaining and empowering women in political leadership roles. Such female politicians include Sidonia Jędrzejewska, Agnieszka Kozłowska, Joanna Miłułka (Schmidt), Hanna Suchocka, Maria Wiśniewska, and Wiesława Ziółkowska. The group also includes Joanna Jaśkowiak who gave up her political career after one term in the National Assembly (Nyczka, 2023b).

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Autor oświadczył, że nie istnieje konflikt interesów.

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Kobiety w samorządzie terytorialnym i w polityce lokalnej miasta Poznania w latach 2018–2022

Streszczenie

Celem przeprowadzonego badania było ukazanie udziału kobiet w pracach samorządu terytorialnego i w polityce lokalnej miasta Poznania. Zastosowano metodę analizy ilościowej działań podejmowanych przez radne Miasta Poznania i Województwa

Wielkopolskiego, obejmujących interpelacje i zapytania oraz funkcje pełnione przez kobiety w tych dwóch samorządach, a także analizę wskaźników roli politycznej, stosowanych do diagnozy przeprowadzanej na potrzeby Europejskiej Karty Równości Kobiet i Mężczyzn w Życiu Lokalnym. W badaniu uwzględniono okres od początku obecnej kadencji samorządu (listopad 2018 r.) do 31 grudnia 2022 r. Wykorzystano dane publikowane w Biuletynach Informacji Publicznej Miasta Poznania i Samorządu Województwa Wielkopolskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: równość kobiet i mężczyzn, samorząd terytorialny, polityka lokalna, Poznań, Wielkopolska