

## Equal Opportunities Caucus (EOC), Ukraine

### Background Information

The Equal Opportunities Caucus (EOC) was formed in December 2011 in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine at the initiative of Ukrainian MPs and with assistance from NDI and funding from USAID under CEPPS.

Key objectives of the EOC is to make advancement of women's rights in Ukraine a high priority of the national agenda, promote gender equality in all spheres of public life and secure equal representation of women in politics.

The Caucus currently comprises 95 MPs (53 women and 42 men) representing 5 parliamentary factions and groups: Servant of the People, European Solidarity, Batkivshchyna, Holos, For the Future and non-faction MPs.

### Major achievements of the Equal Opportunities Caucus and gender champions in Ukraine:

- Women got access to 450 previously banned jobs including in the military.
- Enforceable gender quotas introduced into the Election Code.
- Istanbul Convention ratified.

### Priorities of the Equal Opportunities Caucus for the upcoming period:

- Implement provisions of the Istanbul Convention
- Promote 1325 National action plan
- Engage women in peacebuilding efforts, negotiations and mediation
- Promote women's economic empowerment among IDPs, wives/mothers/family members of war veterans
- Secure winter uniform for military women
- Educate local self-government authorities on how to communicate gender equality issues during wartime and in time of crisis
- Provide economic support to women in communities
- Share Ukraine's progress and achievements on gender equality and women's leadership with other countries.

### Reference materials

In August 2022, on the occasion of Ukraine's 31st Independence Day, the EOC released a [documentary "Gender politics in Ukraine - what has changed in 30 years?"](#), which was filmed back in 2021, but was not presented before because of the full-scale war.

This documentary was produced by the [Equal Opportunities Caucus](#) jointly with [hromadske.ua](#) and with assistance of NDI and support from USAID and other partners and donors (UNDP, UN Women, Sweden, Norway).

The documentary traces back the development of the policy of equal rights and opportunities in Ukraine over the past 30 years of its independence. It talks about the role of parliament and civil society in the process of promoting principles of equality and nondiscrimination in all spheres of life. The film features incumbent and former EOC co-chairs, MPs, politicians, civil society leaders and gender equality advocates. In the movie they talk about the progress towards gender equality in Ukraine, hurdles they were able to overcome, remaining challenges and new perspectives.

### **Co-chairs of the Equal Opportunities Caucus:**

- Olena Kondratyuk, Vice Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
- Maryna Bardina, MP (Servant of the People), Chair of the parliamentary subcommittee on Ukraine's compliance with international commitments on human rights and gender equality
- Maria Ionova, MP (European Solidarity), Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration
- Inna Sovsun, MP (Holos), member of the Committee on Energy, Housing and Utilities Services
- Oleksiy Zhmerenetskyi, MP (Servant of the People), Chair of the Sub-committee on Anti-Corruption Policy in the Area of Digital Innovation and Public Data of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Committee on Anti-Corruption Policy.

### **Bios of the selected co-chairs**

#### **Maryna Bardina, MP (Servant of the People)**

Maryna Bardina, 29, is a first-time MP of the ninth convocation of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. As a member of the ruling Servant of the People (SoP) party, she serves as Deputy Chair of the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation, Chair of the parliamentary subcommittee on Ukraine's compliance with international commitments on human rights and gender equality, as well as a Co-chair of the EOC. Bardina joined the Servant of the People party as a gender expert in March 2019 and later that year was included into the party list for the 2019 Parliamentary election. She spearheads the party's efforts on building a strong women's wing, actively cooperates with the Office of the First Lady and works with the local gender focused caucuses on promoting gender responsive governance. Maryna's focus as a first-time elected member of Parliament has been on advancing gender equality in politics, business and the social sphere. Largely due to Bardina's efforts, Ukraine joined the Biarritz Partnership for Equality, an international platform of establishing gender equality in policymaking. MP Bardina serves as a Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation.



### **Maria Ionova, MP (European Solidarity)**

Maria Ionova is an MP and a member of the European Solidarity faction in the parliament. She began her political career in 2005 as a consultant in the Administration of the President of Ukraine. From 2008 to 2012, Maria served as a member of the Kyiv City Council. Maria was first elected to the Parliament in 2012. Ms. Ionova consistently works on issues of European integration and gender equality as a member of the Committee for Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation. Together with her colleagues from the EOC, MP Ionova has been working on legislation to promote women's rights, preventing and combating domestic violence and protecting children. During the war in the East of Ukraine, prior to the full-scale invasion of the country in 2022, Maria Ionova worked on legislation to strengthen the rights of internally displaced persons, particularly women and children. Maria Ionova regularly visits the contact line zone in Eastern Ukraine. She actively cooperates with volunteers collecting and delivering aid to areas affected by the war. Ms. Ionova received her M.A. in Public Administration from the National Academy of Public Administration under the President of Ukraine. Her legislative track record includes a number of initiatives aimed at advancing women's roles in political life and governance. MP Ionova is a co-founder of the Ukrainian Women's Congress and the Women, Security and Peace platform in Ukraine.



### **Inna Sovsun, MP (Holos)**

Inna Sovsun is a first-time MP of the ninth convocation of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, member of the Holos faction in the parliament and a deputy head of the political party Holos. MP Sovsun is also a member of the Committee on Energy, Housing and Utilities Services, a member of the Parliamentary Association Committee with the European Parliament as well as a member of the US-Ukraine Friendship Group in the Verkhovna Rada. She is also a co-chair of the cross-party EOC that promotes gender equality and inclusion initiatives in the Ukrainian Parliament. Her legal expertise includes education reform, gender equality, and countering sexism. In addition to parliamentary work, Ms. Sovsun works as a lecturer of Political Science at the National University Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the Kyiv School of Economics. In 2014-2016, she held the office of the First Deputy to the Minister of Education. MP Sovsun has consulted on projects for the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, World Bank, USAID, World Health Organization, and European Union. In 2009, Inna co-founded and led a think tank organization, CEDOS, and also managed educational projects in the leading Ukrainian election watchdog OPORA. MP Sovsun holds a Master's degree in European policy from Lund University in Sweden and degrees in Political Science from the National University Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

