



Resolution 1489 (2006)¹

Mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision-making

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In spite of the progress being made in Europe in terms of improving equal opportunities and rights for women and men, the Parliamentary Assembly notes a persistently low level of participation by women in decision-making processes. Women remain under-represented in Europe in national and regional parliaments, municipal councils, governments and posts of responsibility in political parties, the civil service and industry.
2. The Assembly considers that balanced participation by women and men in decision making is a precondition for improving the functioning of democracy and society, as are respect for women's rights, their financial autonomy and their education, in a context of shared responsibilities between women and men. Ongoing under-representation of women in political and economic decision making reflects a basic democratic deficit in both the member states of the Council of Europe and the broader international context.
3. The adoption of legislation or action plans or the introduction of institutional mechanisms aimed at equal opportunities between women and men seldom result in any real increase in female participation at the highest national and international decision-making levels. Many European countries fail to prioritise gender equality and even where the prohibition of discrimination against women is enshrined in legislation it is not always implemented in practice. This means that legislation on equality or gender balance has only very seldom achieved the anticipated results.
4. Persisting stereotypes and traditions or discrimination in terms of access to the labour market or political life – and “career progression” within one's chosen profession – are so many obstacles to female participation in the decision-making process. Few member states have achieved the objective set out in Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation by women and men in political and public decision making, namely that “the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%”.
5. The Assembly is now convinced of the need to make up for lost time. In view of the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies, it is a matter of urgency to promote positive measures because those adopted hitherto to promote women's participation in decision making have had but limited impact. The Council of Europe and its member states must therefore identify the requisite mechanisms and good practices to promote the implementation of Recommendation Rec(2003)3 and alert the European decision-making bodies and public to the need for female participation in decision making.
6. The Assembly therefore invites Council of Europe member and observer states to:
 - 6.1. Set the objective of achieving a gender balance in decision-making processes, with the initial target of a critical mass of at least 40% women in all governmental and elected bodies;

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee acting on behalf of the Assembly on 17 March 2006 (see [Doc.10743](#), report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Cliveti).



- 6.2. with this in mind, prioritise the implementation of Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3, which cannot be successfully put into practice without creating or reinforcing national and international mechanisms for promoting balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making processes and making this a priority in all ministries by implementing gender mainstreaming;
- 6.3. ensure gender-balanced participation in international delegations;
- 6.4. monitor and assess progress by regularly collecting, analysing and disseminating quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at all levels in the various public and private sector decision-making posts, and making public the number of women and men employed at the various civil service levels on an annual basis;
- 6.5. raise the awareness of the media on the issue of gender equality in order to prepare them for the role which they play in forming public opinion of the place of women in society and the impact of the media image of women on their level of participation in public and political life;
- 6.6. associate non-governmental organisations with the implementation of these information campaigns;
- 6.7. encourage access by women to decision making in all spheres of public life by smashing the “glass ceiling”;
- 6.8. reinforce institutional mechanisms;
- 6.9. revise the rules, procedures and, if necessary the electoral systems, in order to include the gender equality dimension with a view to achieving, by 2020, a minimum 40% representation of women in parliaments and other elected assemblies by urging early preparation of the charter for electoral equality proposed by the Assembly in its [Recommendation 1676 \(2004\)](#) on women’s participation in elections;
- 6.10. give financial incentives to those political parties which achieve the aim of a minimum 40% representation of women in the party’s decision-making bodies and amongst candidates elected;
- 6.11. take account of the equality dimension when adopting national, regional and local budgets;
- 6.12. ensure the appropriate implementation of existing legislation on gender mainstreaming strategy;
- 6.13. adopt a framework law and a governmental programme on gender equality and introduce machinery to assess the implementation of the law and the programme and provide for their decentralised implementation;
- 6.14. appoint a specialist on gender equality issues to any existing mediation bodies;
- 6.15. ensure that public institutions set the reasonable objective of ensuring a proportional number of 40% of women in top posts in order to remedy any imbalance in representation of women and men;
- 6.16. promote participation by representatives of civil society, particularly by those who show a keen interest in gender equality issues, in all political debate, thus creating a “bridge” for women between civil society and political life.

The Assembly invites all national and regional parliamentary assemblies to set up committees on equality between women and men.

7. The Assembly decides to ensure full implementation of the principle of balanced participation by women and men in decision-making processes in the Council of Europe and its organs and bodies, and therefore decides to:

- 7.1. reaffirm its Resolutions 1366 (2004) and 1426 (2005) on candidates for the European Court of Human Rights, in which it decided not to take account of lists of candidates that do not include at least one candidate of each sex, except where the candidates belong to the sex under-represented in the Court, that is, representing less than 40% of the total number of judges;
- 7.2. prepare a report, in consultation with those involved in the respective election procedures, on how the representation of both sexes can be realised for candidates to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, the posts of Human Rights Commissioner, Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Secretary General of the Assembly;
- 7.3. continue implementing [Resolution 1348 \(2003\)](#) on gender-balanced representation in the Parliamentary Assembly and reinforce it with binding provisions, amending the Assembly Rules of Procedure if necessary;

- 7.4. encourage female parliamentarians to work together, above and beyond any national and political divisions, within the informal group of female Assembly members, in order to increase their representation in such posts of responsibility as committee, sub-committee and national delegation chairs and encourage them to put their names forward for rapporteurships and to add their names to lists of speakers;
- 7.5. invite the Bureau of the Assembly to propose solutions to problems identified by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, notably the under-representation of women in the bureaux of political groups, national delegations and committees, and the shortage of female rapporteurs;
- 7.6. encourage its political groups to take account of the gender equality principle in appointing the members of committee bureaux and speakers taking the floor on their behalf during debates;
- 7.7. encourage the national delegations to appoint more female Vice-Presidents of the Assembly and chairs of the national delegations themselves;
- 7.8. encourage the committees to appoint more female rapporteurs.