

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 March 2003
at the 831st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15. *b* of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Bearing in mind that women make up more than half of the population and the electorate in its member states, but continue to be seriously under-represented in political and public decision making in a large part of its member states;

Bearing in mind that, in spite of the existence of *de jure* equality, the distribution of power, responsibilities and access to economic, social and cultural resources between women and men is still very unequal due to the persistence of prevailing traditional gender roles;

Mindful that the functioning of electoral systems and political institutions, including political parties, may hamper women's participation in political and public life;

Considering that balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making is a matter of the full enjoyment of human rights, of social justice and a necessary condition for the better functioning of a democratic society;

Considering that the realisation of balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making would lead to better and more efficient policy making through the redefinition of political priorities and the placing of new issues on the political agenda as well as to the improvement of quality of life for all;

Considering that balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making is needed for the development and construction of a Europe based on equality, social cohesion, solidarity and respect for human rights;

Recalling the declaration adopted at the 2nd Summit of the Council of Europe (October 1997) at which the heads of state and government of the Council of Europe stressed "the importance of a more balanced representation of men and women in all sectors of society, including political life", and called for "continued progress with a view to achieving effective equality of opportunities between women and men";

Bearing in mind the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) and its Protocols;

Bearing in mind the European Social Charter (1961), the revised European Social Charter (1996) and the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter providing for a System of Collective Complaints (1995);

Bearing in mind the texts adopted at the European Ministerial Conference on Human Rights held in Rome in 2000;

Bearing in mind the following Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member states of the Council of Europe: Recommendation No. R(85)2 on legal protection against sex discrimination; Recommendation No. R(96)5 on reconciling work and family life and Recommendation No. R(98)14 on gender mainstreaming;

Bearing in mind the following texts adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly: Recommendation 1229 (1994) on equality of rights between women and men; Recommendation 1269 (1995) on achieving real progress in women's rights as from 1995 and Recommendation 1413 (1999) on equal representation in political life;

Bearing in mind the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

Recalling the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), especially its Articles 7 and 8;

Recalling also the commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action as well as in the Agreed Conclusions of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in 2000 (Beijing +5);

Considering that democracy can no longer afford to ignore the competence, skills and creativity of women but must become gender sensitive and include women with different backgrounds and of different age groups in political and public decision making at all levels;

Mindful of the high priority the Council of Europe gives to the promotion of democracy and human rights,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

- I. commit themselves to promote balanced representation of women and men by recognising publicly that the equal sharing of decision-making power between women and men of different background and ages strengthens and enriches democracy;
- II. protect and promote the equal civil and political rights of women and men, including running for office and freedom of association;
- III. ensure that women and men can exercise their individual voting rights and, to this end, take all the necessary measures to eliminate the practice of family voting;
- IV. review their legislation and practice, with the aim of ensuring that the strategies and measures described in this recommendation are applied and implemented;
- V. promote and encourage special measures to stimulate and support women's will to participate in political and public decision making;
- VI. consider setting targets linked to a time scale with a view to reaching balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making;
- VII. ensure that this recommendation is brought to the attention of all relevant political institutions and to public and private bodies, in particular national parliaments, local and regional authorities, political parties, civil service, public and semi-public organisations, enterprises, trade unions, employers' organisations and non-governmental organisations;
- VIII. monitor and evaluate progress in achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, and report regularly to the Committee of Ministers on the measures taken and progress made in this field.

Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2003)3

For the purpose of this recommendation, balanced participation of women and men is taken to mean that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%.

On this basis, the governments of member states are invited to consider the following measures:

A. Legislative and administrative measures

Member states should:

~~1~~.1. consider possible constitutional and/or legislative changes, including positive action measures, which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making;

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~~2~~.2. adopt administrative measures so that official language reflects a balanced sharing of power between women and men;

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~~3~~.3. consider adopting legislative reforms to introduce parity thresholds for candidates in elections at local, regional, national and supra-national levels. Where proportional lists exist, consider the introduction of zipper systems;

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~~4~~.4. consider action through the public funding of political parties in order to encourage them to promote gender equality;

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~~5~~.5. where electoral systems are shown to have a negative impact on the political representation of women in elected bodies, adjust or reform those systems to promote gender-balanced representation;

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~~6~~.6. consider adopting appropriate legislative measures aimed at restricting the concurrent holding of several elected political offices simultaneously;

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~~7~~.7. adopt appropriate legislation and/or administrative measures to improve the working conditions of elected representatives at the local, regional, national and supra-national levels to ensure more democratic access to elected bodies;

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~~8~~.8. adopt appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to support elected representatives in the reconciliation of their family and public responsibilities and, in particular, encourage parliaments and local and regional authorities to ensure that their timetables and working methods enable elected representatives of both sexes to reconcile their work and family life;

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~~9~~.9. consider adopting appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to ensure that there is gender-balanced representation in all appointments made by a minister or government to public committees;

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~~10~~.10. ensure that there is a gender-balanced representation in posts or functions whose holders are nominated by government and other public authorities;

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~~11~~.11. ensure that the selection, recruitment and appointment processes for leading positions in public decision making are gender sensitive and transparent;

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~~12~~.12. make the public administration exemplary both in terms of a gender-balanced distribution of decision-making positions and in equal career development for women and men;

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~~43~~-13. consider adopting appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to ensure that there is gender-balanced representation in all national delegations to international organisations and fora;

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~~44~~-14. take due account of gender balance when appointing representatives to international mediation and negotiating committees, particularly in the peace process or the settlement of conflicts;

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~~45~~-15. consider taking legislative and/or administrative measures aiming at encouraging and supporting employers to allow those participating in political and public decision making to have the right to take time off from their employment without being penalised;

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~~46~~-16. set up, where necessary, support and strengthen the work of the national equality machinery in bringing about balanced participation in political and public life;

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~~47~~-17. encourage parliaments at all levels to set up parliamentary committees or delegations for women's rights and equal opportunities and to implement gender mainstreaming in all their work;

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B. Supportive measures

Member states should:

~~48~~-18. support, by all appropriate measures, programmes aimed at stimulating a gender balance in political life and public decision making initiated by women's organisations and all organisations working for gender equality;

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~~49~~-19. consider the setting up of a data bank of women willing to serve in political and public decision-making positions;

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~~20~~-20. support and develop women's political action by providing the opportunity for women elected representatives to network at the local, regional, national and international levels;

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~~21~~-21. develop and support mentoring/work-shadowing programmes, confidence building, leadership and media training for women considering entering political and public decision making;

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~~22~~-22. encourage training for women candidates and elected representatives in the use of information and communication technologies;

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~~23~~-23. incorporate into school curricula education and training activities aimed at sensitising young people about gender equality and preparing them for democratic citizenship;

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~~24~~-24. promote the participation of young people, especially young women, in associations to enable them to acquire experience, knowledge and capacities which are transferable to the field of institutional, and especially political, participation;

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~~25~~-25. encourage youth organisations to ensure a balanced participation of women and men in their decision-making structures;

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~~26~~-26. encourage greater involvement of ethnic and cultural minorities, and especially women from these minorities, in decision making at all levels;

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27. inform political parties of the different strategies used in the various countries to promote the balanced participation of women and men in elected assemblies; encourage them to implement one or more of these strategies and to promote balanced participation of women and men in positions of decision making within the party structures;

28-28. support programmes initiated by the social partners (employers' and workers' organisations) to promote balanced participation of women and men in positions of responsibility and decisionmaking, within their own ranks and in the context of collective bargaining;

29-29. encourage enterprises and associations to ensure balanced representation of women and men in their decision-making bodies, in particular those subsidised for providing public services or implementing public policies;

30-30. promote campaigns aimed at the general public in order to raise its awareness of the importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decision making as a prerequisite for genuine democracy;

31-31. promote campaigns aimed at encouraging the sharing of responsibilities between women and men in the private sphere;

32-32. promote campaigns aimed at specific groups, in particular politicians, social partners and those who recruit and nominate political and public decision makers, in order to raise their awareness of the importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decisionmaking;

33-33. organise interactive seminars on gender equality for key people in society, such as leaders and top officials, to make them aware of the importance of the balanced participation of women and men in all levels of decisionmaking;

34-34. support non-governmental organisations and research institutes that conduct studies on women's participation in and impact on decision-making and the decision-making environment;

35-35. carry out research on the distribution of votes according to opinion polls in order to determine the voting patterns of women and men;

36-36. promote research on the obstacles which prevent women's access to political and public decision-making at the different levels and publish the results;

37-37. promote research on women's participation in social and voluntary sector decision-making;

38-38. promote gender-sensitive research on the roles, functions, status and working conditions of elected representatives at all levels;

39-39. promote balanced participation in decision-making positions in the media, including management, programming, education, training, research and regulatory bodies;

40-40. support training and awareness-raising for students of journalism and media professionals on questions linked to gender equality and how to avoid sexist stereotypes and sexism;

41-41. encourage media professionals to ensure that women and men candidates and elected representatives receive equal visibility in the media, especially during election periods.

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C. Monitoring

Member states should:

42-42. consider establishing independent bodies, such as a parity observatory or a special independent mediation body, with a view to following governmental policy in the field of balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, or entrust national equality machineries with this task;

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43-43. consider setting up and applying indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of the balanced participation of women and men in decision making on the basis of internationally comparable gender segregated data;

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44-44. consider adopting the following indicators for measuring progress in the field of political and public decision-making:

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- i. the percentage of women and men elected representatives in parliaments (supra-national/national/federal/regional) and local assemblies according to political party;
- ii. the percentage of women and men elected representatives in parliaments (supra-national/national) compared to the number of candidates according to political party (the success rate);
- iii. the percentage of women and men in national delegations to nominated assemblies such as the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and to international organisations and fora;
- iv. the percentage of women and men in national, federal and regional governments;
- v. the number of women and men senior/junior ministers in the different fields of action (portfolios/ministries) of the national, federal and regional governments of the member states;
- vi. the percentage of the highest ranking women and men civil servants and their distribution in different fields of action;
- vii. the percentage of women and men judges in the supreme court;
- viii. the percentage of women and men in bodies appointed by the government;
- ix. the percentage of women and men in the decision-making bodies of political parties at national level;
- x. the percentage of women and men members of employer, labour and professional organisations and the percentage of women and men in their decision-making bodies at national level;

45-45. submit, every other year, reports to their national parliaments on the measures taken and progress made according to the indicators listed above;

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46-46. publish, every other year, reports on the measures taken and progress made in women's involvement in decision-making and disseminate these reports widely;

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47-47. publish and make readily accessible, statistics on candidates for political office and on elected representatives containing information on sex, age, occupation, occupational sector (private/public), education;

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48-48. encourage the regular analysis of the visibility and portrayal of women and men in national news and current affairs programmes, especially during election campaigns.

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